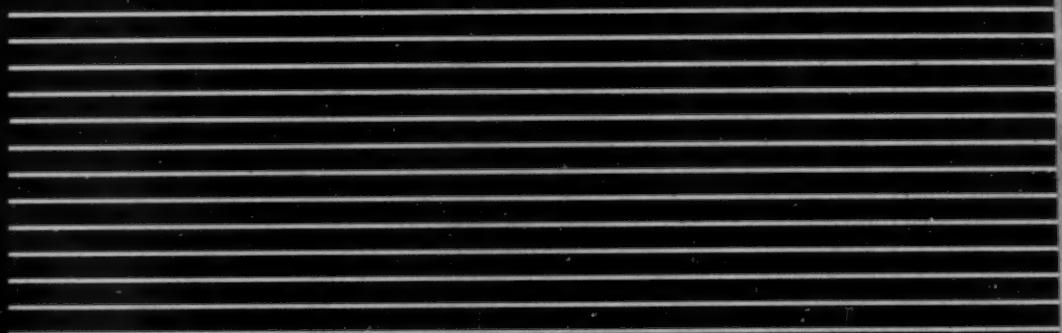


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Vol. 5

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COLLEGE ENGLISH

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No. 6

WHO ARE OUR FAVORITE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AUTHORS?

GORHAM MUNSON¹

The machinery of reporting upon the popularity of new books has been so developed that it is possible without trouble to know in any given month the quite recent trends of American taste for contemporary authors. It is not easy, however, to secure accurate information about the popularity among us of authors of the past. The information exists, but it is piecemeal, scattered among the sales records of reprint publishing houses and bookstores and among the cards and in the heads of librarians. It has not been collected into a comprehensive picture upon which generalizations can be made.

To take a test question, what hold does Dickens have upon the American reading public in this fifth year of the second World War? Are his books selling so well that we can say that, like Old Man River, he just keeps rolling along? Is there at the public libraries a heavy and continuing demand for the *Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and other famous titles of the reformer-novelist? We know that about ten years ago there was a critical revival of interest in Dickens, led by Alexander Woolcott and abetted by sophisticated moderns

like Edmund Wilson and Dorothy Parker, and it was bruited about that Dickens was a sure and steady seller. But that was ten years ago in early New Deal America when the reforming temperament, shocked by the blackness of the depression, was seizing upon literature as an engine of social change. How does it stand today with Dickens in a time of expanded national income and shortage of manpower?

Fortunately, a survey on a necessarily restricted scale, but nonetheless valuable, was carried out in 1943 by Miss Mary Barrett, at that time book-review editor of the *Library Journal*, which enables us to answer with some confidence this question about Dickens' continued popularity and other questions concerning the present-day vogue of many other nineteenth-century authors. Dickens we can now say has been declining in the affections of the unconstrained reading public and is far outdistanced by five other nineteenth-century writers. Who the five leaders are and some speculation why they are in the lead will be given shortly, but it is first necessary to describe Miss Barrett's heretofore unpublished survey.

The survey was restricted to nineteenth-century British and American au-

¹ Recently editor of Robert M. McBride Company, now engaged in preparing a book, *The Credit Power of the Republic*, to appear in late spring through Creative Age Press.

thors. Such books as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Hugo's *Les Misérables* were therefore excluded. The inquiry centered upon novelists, but essayists and poets were included in the questionnaire sent out by Miss Barrett. The sources applied to for data were reprint publishers, such as the World Publishing Company and the "Modern Library," chain bookstores, such as the Doubleday, Doran shops, and leading public libraries in different parts of the country. The questionnaire made it clear that the object was to discover spontaneous and unforced demand for nineteenth-century American and British writers. In other words, allowance was to be made for such demand as could be attributed to required reading in schools. A picture was desired of the survival of nineteenth-century authors *outside schoolrooms*. Who were the favorites of the public who voluntarily went to bookstore and library for nineteenth-century reading matter and exercised a free taste?

According to Miss Barrett's survey, the five leaders are *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy, and *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman.

It is in every way a surprising list. One would not have expected to find Walt Whitman so far to the front, and one would not have dreamed that Bellamy would lead authors like Thackeray and Dickens. Yet there it is. *Looking Backward* is one of the twenty-eight "most active classics" published by the World Publishing Company. It is a popular title in the "Modern Library," although not among the thirty best-sellers of that series, and it is one of three American classics that are actively selling in the Doubleday, Doran bookshops. Testi-

mony from the librarians is equally impressive. The Brooklyn Public Library reports that the demand for *Looking Backward* is constant; in the 1930's the Cleveland Public Library bought twenty copies of this utopian romance; the New York Public Library replaces the book in quantity and finds it always in demand; "Bellamy's *Looking Backward* is ageless," says Miss Lillian M. English of the Philadelphia Free Library in commenting on its popularity with her borrowers.

The librarians are equally positive about the present-day popularity of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. "Steady emergence into popularity" (Los Angeles Public Library), "no falling-off in demand" (Brooklyn Public Library), "fairly steady demand" (St. Louis Public Library), "very real popularity . . . one of the three most popular American poets, the other two being Robert Frost and Edgar Guest" (Philadelphia Free Library), "tenth in list of eighteen most popular nineteenth-century classics" (Boston Public Library), "always in demand and replaced in quantity" (New York Public Library)—these are typical reports on the extent to which borrowers draw out the seer of democratic vistas. The World Publishing Company lists *Leaves of Grass* among its twenty-eight "most active classics." In the "Modern Library" *Leaves of Grass* has been among the more popular but not best-selling titles; the publisher's faith in the strong and steady appeal of Whitman is further demonstrated by his choice of *Leaves of Grass* for the new series, "Illustrated Modern Library," now being inaugurated.

However, *Looking Backward* and *Leaves of Grass* are outrun by the other three titles in our group of five leaders. The real pacesetters are *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Wuthering Heights*.

For purposes of comparison with the demand for Whitman and Bellamy, I shall summarize the evidence of powerful demand for Jane Austen. Her complete novels are in the "Modern Library Giants" series, and *Pride and Prejudice* is among the World Publishing Company's twenty-eight "most active classics." The Doubleday, Doran shops include *Pride and Prejudice* among the seven best-selling nineteenth-century English classics. Now for its library vitality. It is in the Popular Library Room of the Los Angeles Public Library; it stands eleventh in a list of eighteen most popular nineteenth-century titles supplied by the Boston Public Library; the Cleveland Public Library bought twenty-one copies of *Pride and Prejudice* in the 1930's and eighteen copies thus far in the decade of the forties; it is in steady use at the St. Louis Public Library, and the New York Public Library reports that it is always in demand and is replaced in quantity; when the Brooklyn Public Library opened its central building in 1941, it put in thirty copies. But there is a refrain running through these reports—a marked increase in demand was experienced after *Pride and Prejudice* appeared as a motion picture.

Similar data could be given for the immense popularity of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and we hear the same refrain of demand greatly stimulated by the screen versions of these romances. It is that refrain that makes me hesitate when it comes to interpreting the revival of interest in Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters. Shall we read a significance into the fact that the three leading favorites are intensely feminine? Does this really indicate a further feminization of American taste for fiction, already so deplored by some of our masculine novelists? What is the secret of the seemingly over-

whelming appeal to us of Jane Austen's quiet humorous domestic realism? And of the vastly different stormy passion of the Brontës?

These questions, in my opinion, cannot be intelligently answered until we know much more than we do about the impact of the motion pictures upon literary taste. What is needed before we can begin to formulate an interpretation is the development of a special research project, one that would ascertain the degree of popularity of a novel before and after a major motion-picture production and would further ascertain just what effect, what permanent mark, upon readers was made by the book to which the motion picture had led them. Certainly, the movie version, like an extremely powerful advertising campaign, invariably revives interest in a classic. But how much of this new demand sticks to the author after it is aroused? Does movie taste transform itself into literary taste? Or is there something ephemeral about the demand for Jane Austen and the Brontës? Is the stimulus given by the movie of the "shot-in-the-arm" type?

Speaking as a literary man, I am not sanguine about the strengthening of literary taste by the movies, for librarians have whispered that books drawn out as a consequence of their popularity in the movies are often returned with a promptitude that raises the suspicion that they were only partly read. The suspicion is rife that the movie-going convert to Jane Austen is disappointed in *Pride and Prejudice* in book form. People who have enjoyed and loved a classic are generally disappointed when they view the Hollywood treatment of the work. It seems to be just as true that the people who make their first acquaintance with the classics via Hollywood are disappointed when they turn to the originals. I am therefore

disinclined to attribute much significance from a literary point of view to the popularity of books in which the motion-picture factor has been strongly operative. I should want to see how this popularity sustains itself over a longer period than the last few years. It thus comes about that the popularity of *Looking Backward* and *Leaves of Grass*, which have not gone through the Hollywood mill, is far more indicative of a spontaneous public taste in old books than is the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Jane Eyre*.

Before essaying further interpretation of Miss Barrett's survey, let us glance at it once more. It reveals that behind the five leaders there is a group of seven nineteenth-century authors whose popularity is very considerable. These are: Thoreau, chiefly *Walden*; Mark Twain, principally *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*; Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, with some help from the moving picture; Anthony Trollope; Thomas Hardy; Thackeray, with indications of declining popularity; and Dickens, likewise not so popular as formerly. Finally, we may note some authors for whom there is now definitely little demand at the sources canvassed by Miss Barrett. These include Charles Kingsley, Henry James, William Dean Howells, Bret Harte, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Charles Reade.

Of the runner-up group of seven writers, the most interesting for reasons soon to be given is Trollope, and it will not be amiss to summarize the reports on the chronicler of Barchester. The Boston Public Library places Trollope as high as third in its list of eighteen most popular writers of the last century. The New York Public Library makes a point of a Trollope revival in the last five or six years. In Philadelphia there is a Trollope

Society, founded by that enthusiastic Trolloperian, the late A. Edward Newton, and it is in part responsible for the steady circulation of Trollope's novels reported by the Philadelphia Free Library. From the Brooklyn Public Library comes word of a moderate demand, but the Cleveland Public Library, which sometimes displays Trollope on the reader's adviser rack, feels that the small print of their editions handicaps circulation. *Barchester Towers* and *The Warden* were issued in a single volume by the "Modern Library," but the book is not among the popular titles, although the fact that it is included in the "Modern Library" is proof that by ordinary standards it has a substantial sale. Doubleday, Doran bookshops, however, report a fair demand, sufficient to keep Trollope among the seven nineteenth-century British authors still actively selling.

Trollope's coming into favor is interesting because it has happened without any critical fanfare, with no help from stage or screen, and with little if any help, I surmise, from educators. (In Neilson and Thorndike's *History of English Literature*, published in 1929, Trollope received just fourteen words!) The Trollope revival, occurring with no stir about him in the press or on the radio, looks like a pure reader preference manifesting itself without adventitious stimulants. Much the same can be said of the reader preference shown for *Looking Backward*. There are the Bellamy Clubs, of course, just as there is a Trollope Society, but they cannot account for the widespread interest. There is something quiet and pure, too, about the growth of Whitman in favor. Twenty-five years ago the young critical generation of Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford created a furore over Whitman, but since then American criticism

on the whole has been unexcited about the good gray poet. It is well worth remarking that there is nothing fashionable about the impulses which have propelled increasing numbers of readers toward Whitman and Bellamy and Trollope.

I am wary of guessing what the overall state of American taste, as manifested in its nineteenth-century preferences, may mean. Queried about the meaning of the popularity of the twenty-eight best-selling nineteenth-century titles on his list, Mr. B. D. Zevin, vice-president of the World Publishing Company, wrote to Miss Barrett:

The explanation for the continuing popularity is, I am sure, obvious. These are among the great creative and deathless works of the greatest writers, representing books which are an integral part of civilization and world culture. The press, radio, and motion pictures, and other forces have helped to keep these books alive. Educators have, of course, been vastly instrumental in keeping these books actively in use.

This comes from one of the shrewdest judges of the commercial possibilities of the classics, a man who deals in the mass sales of books, and it is therefore of special interest that he asserts that nineteenth-century classics survive (1) because of their intrinsic merit and (2) because the organs of transmitting our cultural heritage are engaged in perpetuating them. So much it is safe to say, but beyond that I distrust generalities. Indeed, I think we are forced to take a pluralistic view of our national taste. The explanation of why readers are turning to Whitman is not the explanation for their turning to Trollope; for each of our favorites there is an explanation, but it is most difficult and probably impossible to bind the separate explanations into a comprehensive simple accounting of American taste at the present moment. This is my excuse for confining ourselves

to the three purest examples of unforced taste—our preferences for Whitman, Bellamy, and Trollope.

The turning to Whitman I should call a response to the violent attack upon democracy of the past decade. Word from abroad reached the general public that democracy was "decadent"; the jeers of Goebbels and of Virginio Gayda were heard and the fist-shakings of Hitler and Mussolini were noted. Their democratic faith challenged, the general public sought to fortify it; they found their way back to the prophet of democracy. As if thirsty for a religion of democracy, they began quaffing Whitman. They did not go back to *The Federalist* and the springs of republicanism; they did not have an intellectual hunger but an emotional craving. They went to the chanter of the *élan* of democracy. An almost instinctive search for a democratic *élan* at a time when many were asserting that the *élan* of the future had passed to totalitarian nations is the explanation that seems to fit the spontaneous rise in popularity of Whitman.

Coming to Bellamy, it seems to me that it is not quite enough to say that Americans are keenly interested in social reform. The characteristics of social reform in America from the muckrakers to the New Dealers have been non-European. We have been affected by the dogmas of Marx, but we have obstinately refused to be doctrinaire. *Looking Backward*, which, by the way, is skilfully and audaciously constructed and written in a masterly style, springs from us and is American to the core. It suits a country where class structure is not rigid, where, indeed, social habits of mind are remarkably fluid. It foregoes the class struggle of Marx and foresees a peaceful evolution into a planned economy in which religion, far from being considered

an opiate of the people, has an important place. The book is imaginative, and in the end it is an impressive appeal to the American conscience; it seeks to arouse the emotion of remorse. To speak in oversimplified terms, if we can hold Hitler responsible for the good of a renewed interest in Whitman, we can credit the New Deal with giving a broad impetus toward a wider reading of Bellamy.

But what are we to make of the Trollope vogue? I do not think we can call it an escape from the crisis of the present. Trollope was a realist, shrewd in judgment of character, fully aware of base motives; he does not distort or sweeten facts. Nor does he take us into costume periods. He describes a highly commercial society in which money is corrupting both politics and the churches. Read in a certain way, he is quite close to the social questions of our generation. Yet he is infinitely refreshing after much reading of contemporary novels. Not for escape but for refreshment do we go to Trollope, and this must be because he supplies us something that is largely missing from contemporary literature. There is something tight and forced about many novels today. It is Trollope's tolerance and spaciousness that we love. He takes delight in human character and in the dramatic scenes human beings play

out, only half-aware of what they are doing. There is no strain in his long books, because his creative capacity is so large, and there is humor and vivacity and sheer fun throughout. His tolerant realism refreshes a generation beaten upon by the relentless fast-paced journalism of the newsweekly, by clever sophisticated novelists who cruelly pursue characters they hate, by exhaustive portrayers of the sordid details of worlds they have never made, and by small talents overreaching themselves. Art, a philosopher once said, begins in delight, and Trollope had positive gusto in conceiving his fictions. We turn to him because he gives us a kind of pleasure our contemporary novelists cannot give.

Such conclusions as this article has reached are modest ones, but they seem to me greatly encouraging. A taste that in our times likes Whitman, Bellamy, and Trollope is a sound taste, and the circumstances surrounding these three preferences show that it is an uncorrupted and naturally good taste. We want our faith in democracy chanted and sung by a bard; we want our concern for social reform lifted to an imaginative plane; we want our realism saturated with broad and warm feeling. In short, from the depths of ourselves we want literature.

THREE VIEWS OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS REFLECTED IN AMERICAN LITERATURE¹

RANDALL STEWART²

Broadly speaking, one may discover in American literature three different views of the individual.³ I shall endeavor to name and describe these views (taking them up in their historical order), to illustrate them from American writers, and to consider some of their ethical and social implications.

I

The first is the Puritan view. Puritan thought, though comprising many shades of opinion, was in agreement on one basic belief, namely, the doctrine of original sin, the belief in the innate sinfulness of man. The classic expression of this doctrine is found in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. "By Original Sin," wrote Edwards in a discourse entitled *The Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, "is meant the innate, sinful depravity of the heart." In defending the doctrine, Edwards relied not only upon scriptural authority and metaphysical argument but also upon the evidence of fact, for the Puritans were realists. "It signifies nothing," he declared, "to exclaim against plain fact. Such is the fact, most evident and acknowledged fact, with respect to the state of all mankind." Man was not only innately sinful, according to Edwards, but also predestined by the sovereignty of God. The divine

predestination, however, did not relieve man of responsibility. The great need was for man's redemption through divine grace, and everlasting diligence was necessary "to make your calling and election sure."

Views similar to Edwards' were held by many people in colonial America. But these views lost ground in the eighteenth century with the rise of deistical thought, and they continued to lose ground in the nineteenth century with the advance of romantic thought. The Puritan attitude, however, had an able and sympathetic interpreter in the nineteenth century in Nathaniel Hawthorne, who set himself pretty stubbornly against the romantic current. Hawthorne was, in many ways, an incorrigible reactionary.

The romantic view very generally superseded the Puritan view in nineteenth-century America. Despite the many shades of romantic opinion, the romantics agreed in rejecting the Edwardsian doctrines. Man was not predestined but free; he was not innately sinful but innately good. This last point is so crucial that the distinguished critic T. E. Hulme has defined "romantics" as "all who do not believe in the Fall of Man."

I shall not attempt to trace the origin and development of the familiar romantic doctrines: the goodness of man, his essential freedom, his infinite perfectibility. Suffice it to say that first Emerson, and later Whitman, were the most eloquent interpreters of the romantic doc-

¹ Read before a meeting of the English Club of Wellesley College.

² Professor of English in Brown University.

³ In a short paper of the present scope, oversimplification is inevitable. I have attempted to present only what have seemed to be the dominant trends of thought.

trines in nineteenth-century America. The new doctrines were certainly expansive and encouraging. God reveals himself to every man, Emerson believed; and, since this is so, every man should trust his own high intuitions. (Emerson apparently made an exception to this fundamental belief when he wrote in his journal: "It is not in the power of God to make a communication of his will to a Calvinist.") Whitman urged upon the individual an appreciation of himself:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself. . . .
Nor do I understand who there can be, more
wonderful than myself.

The self that was being celebrated, the reader will note, was what Edwards would have called the natural man, the unregenerate self. Whitman certainly went as far as possible in the opposite direction from Edwards. He even celebrated, somewhat irrelevantly, the animals, because

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for
their sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty
to God.

Emerson and Whitman, in short, deified the individual. He no longer stood in need of regeneration because he was excellent as he was. "Yourself a newborn bard of the Holy Ghost . . ." said Emerson. And Whitman declared: "Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

If according to the Puritan view man is bad and requires a radical regeneration, and according to the romantic view he is good and needs only an opportunity for his latent goodness to develop, according to the third view, which we may call the modern or scientific or mechanistic, man is neither good nor bad but the result of certain inexorable

forces of heredity and environment. This view obviously bears the mark first of biological science and second—a somewhat later influence—of sociological investigation. Even Emerson, in an essay on "Fate" in 1860, recognized biological inheritance as imposing a limitation upon the individual, though he asserted again the transcendency of man's spiritual capacities: "If Fate is immense, so is Power immense." Whitman, needless to say, never thought of biology as limitation.

The mechanistic view became dominant in American literature with Dreiser, and has continued the dominant view down to the present time, particularly in our prose fiction. The characters in *Sister Carrie*, published in 1900, have no will, no responsibility, no liability to praise or blame. They are neither good nor bad. They are the products, willy-nilly, of certain chemical forces and of certain social forces. One might plot their courses infallibly if one were scientist enough to discover the chemical formulas of their bodies and the formulas of their environments. "Among the forces," wrote Dreiser, "which sweep and play through the universe, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind." From Dreiser to Steinbeck, the individual tends to lose his importance as an individual. He becomes interesting, rather, for a certain representative value, and he becomes interesting as a study in behavior. There have been, to be sure, dissenting opinions: the humanism of Babbitt and Foerster, the classicism of Eliot, the romanticism of Thomas Wolfe. But the dominant attitude of the last forty years—the attitude not only of our most influential writers, the novelists, but also of the educated laity generally—has been the mechanistic attitude.

II

Having identified and described the three principal views of the individual, we may now consider some of their ethical and social implications. These implications may be of value not only in the interpretation of our past but in the recognition of some of our present difficulties. Perhaps the best approach to the problem is to inquire what was gained and what was lost when the first view was superseded by the second and the second by the third—for, with each step of what used to be called “progress,” there has been both gain and loss.

There were all sorts of gains, of course, when the romantic view of the individual took the place of the Puritan view. There was a new hopefulness and cheerfulness in the air. The romantic doctrines were enormously stimulating. The young men, after listening to a lecture by Emerson, “walked homeward with prouder strides over the creaking snow.” Much of our best literature from Emerson down to Thomas Wolfe reflects this exalted conception of human nature. The stimulus was productive in America not only of literature but of action, action which was confident and aggressive, if not always intelligent and ethical.

Perhaps the greatest single gain is to be found in the advance of democracy. I shall not attempt to say whether democracy would have come at all without the romantic philosophy. Lowell, to be sure, once said that “Puritanism laid the egg of democracy”; and one might argue that there was nothing in Puritan theology to preclude democracy. Indeed, Puritan theology seemed to begin with a kind of equalitarian premise: that all men are sinners, and all souls are precious, in God’s sight. But the fact remains that the early Puritans were

hostile to the democratic idea: “Democracy,” said John Cotton, “I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed?” Moreover, it can hardly have been an accident that a late Puritan like President Timothy Dwight of Yale was the staunchest of political conservatives, an extreme Federalist who looked upon the people with profound distrust and who predicted in 1800 that if Jefferson were elected, “we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution.” The conclusion seems inescapable that the Puritan idea retarded, and the romantic idea greatly accelerated, the growth of democracy. If men were innately good, obviously they could be trusted with the responsibility of self-government. Emerson and Whitman of course—Emerson sometimes with a touch of Puritan reluctance and Whitman with scarcely any reluctance at all—were champions of democracy. Let us grant, then, that the great contribution in America of the romantic view was American democracy.

That was a great gain. But there was an attendant loss. The loss may be described as a relaxation. Now there was nothing relaxed about Emerson, thanks to his Puritan inheritance. His doctrines had a Puritan austerity. His self-reliance presupposed a disciplined intuition. The good life according to Emerson was no doubt almost as difficult as the good life according to Edwards. But Emerson did not sufficiently advertise the difficulty; to the casual reader, the Emersonian plan looked easy. In Whitman, the relaxation was more than apparent:

I loaf and invite my soul;
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of
summer grass.

Hawthorne sensed the danger when he wrote that brilliant satire *The Celestial Railroad*. It is an adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress* with modern improvements. Instead of going to the Celestial City on foot, like Bunyan's pilgrim, Hawthorne's characters ride comfortably on the railroad train. Burdens are no longer carried on the back, but checked in the baggage car. A bridge spans the Slough of Despond; a tunnel leads through the Hill Difficulty; modern gas lamps illuminate the Valley of the Shadow of Death. But the train stops short of the Celestial City, owing to a limitation of franchise. Bunyan's way, Hawthorne thought, was still the best.

The doctrine of original sin makes an important difference. If a man cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner," then we have at once a recognition of a state of affairs which requires amendment. He may be expected to put himself through a course of discipline. By fasting and prayer and meditation on holy things he may attain unto salvation. But if he says with Whitman, I am good already, I "stand cool and composed [the original reading was "cool and supercilious"] before a million universes," it is difficult to find in such an attitude a motivation for discipline. We lost with the eclipse of the Puritan view a powerful disciplinary force; we became comparatively relaxed, ethically speaking.

Once more, what did we gain and lose when the scientific or mechanistic view superseded the romantic? Man now becomes, the reader will recall, neither good nor bad, but the unmoral product of physiological and social forces over which he has little if any control.

There has been an immense gain in tolerance, in human sympathy, in social consciousness. A man was formerly thought in some degree reprehensible if

he committed a crime. This is hardly true any longer. His heredity or his environment or both are to blame. Possibly the glandular secretions are to blame; possibly an unfortunate incident in childhood has given him a distorted outlook on life. It becomes the obligation of society to provide the instruments by which these distortions and maladjustments may be corrected. The physician, the psychoanalyst, the social worker, are these instruments, and their position in modern society has assumed enormous and constantly increasing importance. We have never been so socially minded, so tolerant, as now. This is a very great gain, and I should not wish to be construed as minimizing its value.

But there has been a loss. The individual as individual has withered—so much so that the terms "individual," "individualistic," "individualism," at least in some quarters, are no longer quite respectable. (I was a little shocked to read in a recent book by a distinguished professor of English a reference to "the Philistine dogma of self-help." It had never occurred to me to apply the term "Philistine" to Emerson and Edwards and the many other representatives of the humane tradition.)

Under the Puritan dispensation, the individual was disciplined and responsible. He also had a peculiar importance: there was more joy in heaven over one sinner who repented than over ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance. Under the romantic dispensation, the individual, though undisciplined, was still important and responsible—more important, at least in an egoistic sense, and more responsible, if social freedom is the measure of responsibility. Moreover, Puritan and romantic were agreed in this: that the good society was a society composed of good

individuals. Improvement could be made, not in the mass, but only one individual at a time. "As for *doing* good," Thoreau wrote in *Walden*,

it does not agree with my constitution. . . . If I were to preach at all in this strain, I should say rather, Set about *being* good. As if the sun should stop when he had kindled his fires up to the splendor of a moon or a star of the sixth magnitude, and go about like a Robin Goodfellow, peeping in at every cottage window, inspiring lunatics, tainting meats, and making darkness visible, instead of steadily increasing his genial heat and beneficence till he is of such brightness that no mortal can look him in the face, and then, and in the meanwhile too, going about the world in his own orbit, doing it good, or rather, as a truer philosophy has discovered, the world going about him getting good.

Under the mechanistic dispensation, the individual has deteriorated into an automaton. He has been deprived of the Puritan discipline and the Puritan responsibility to God; he has also been deprived of the romantic sense of his high nature, his freedom, his obligation to hitch his wagon to a star. I am inclined to attribute the present reduced status of the individual to the influence of scientific thought and procedures. The individual is important today—indifferently with other individuals—only as a subject of a vast scientific experiment. Physiologically, if the thyroid doesn't get you, then the pituitary must. Psychologically, you are a congeries of responses to stimuli. Sociologically, you must "adjust" (the verb no longer requires, in common scientific usage, the reflexive pronoun). The greatest of American individualists was not interested primarily in adjustment: "Whoso would be a man," Emerson said, "must be a non-conformist."

It is no profound observation to suggest a connection between the present state of the individual and the present

state of the world. If in the romantic period the individual was somewhat relaxed, in the mechanistic period he is practically paralyzed. And the ethical paralysis of the individual is at once a cause and a result of totalitarianism. MacLeish in *The Fall of the City* portrays these helpless individuals of the modern scientific world and the political consequences of their helplessness:

They don't see! They lie on the paving. They lie in the
Burnt spears: the ashes of sorrow. They lie there.

They don't see or they won't see. They are silent.

The people invent their oppressors; they wish to believe in them.

They wish to be free of their freedom: released from their liberty—

The long labor of liberty ended.
The city of masterless men has found a master!
The city has fallen!

Well, the American city has not fallen. Americans have not been reduced to such apathy that they wish to be free of their freedom, to be released from their liberty, because they have not completely lost their inheritance from the great Puritan period and from the great romantic period. The mechanistic view and its concomitant, political totalitarianism, have not been able utterly to abolish or destroy the belief in the individual's importance, his responsibilities, his powers under divine guidance. We still believe, despite what we have been told for a generation, that man is something more than a chemical combination of secretions, or a collection of responses to stimuli, or a product of social and economic forces. There are already signs of a revitalized individualism, an individualism which defies and transcends the modern determinisms.

The Puritan individual was often bigoted and grim. The romantic indi-

vidual was often unscrupulous. I am not advocating a return to either the bigotry and grimness or the unscrupulousness. But while retaining the modern tolerance and social sense, we need to recapture something of the discipline of the Puritan view and something of the positive faith, the Emersonian self-reliance, of the romantic view. If the

question is asked, How can one hold beliefs derived from conflicting premises? the answer must be that we are all eclectics: undeterred by origins and premises, we select beliefs which we find necessary. And in any event, there can be little doubt that the special virtues inherent in each of the three views are necessary to our well-being today.

KING LEAR: A PROPHETIC TRAGEDY

BENJAMIN T. SPENCER¹

Whether the motives and the tensions behind *King Lear* were ultimately personal or public, we can, and indeed need, never know. Even to assert with the economic determinists that it was written to meet the vogue of tragedy in early Jacobean days is merely to evoke the same essential question from another angle and ask: Why the public demand for tragedy? Surely *Lear* was not written, as one confident Shakespearean scholar has in effect declared, merely as a melodramatic potboiler to impress upon James's subjects the ills attending a divided kingdom. Shakespeare's concern and wisdom here are much more inclusive than political expediency; for converged in the tragedy are his most stark and fearful conclusions about man as he saw him in the Renaissance. I add the limiting phrase "in the Renaissance" because *Lear* is especially pertinent to and conditioned by the type of man who emerged in sixteenth-century England (trailing clouds of medievalism, to be sure) and who has persisted to what many are inclined to believe may be his death throes in our day. That is, *Lear*

embodies much of the nobility and many of the weaknesses peculiarly inherent in our post-medieval Western civilization. Neither the Middle Ages nor the Greeks and Romans, I think, could have written such a tragedy, nor could they have easily understood it. It involves and, indeed, issues from conceptions of the state, the family, human affection, and individualism from which those earlier eras were philosophically and religiously divergent. How much Shakespeare was aware of the historical bearing of his drama, I should not venture to judge. He wrote more richly and allusively than he knew (that is, he did not consciously rationalize or analyze all his symbols); and, in setting down the sheerest tragedy of man as he saw him in the early Renaissance, he set down much of the tragedy of man as we still see him, inclosed as we are fundamentally in the same epoch. But, more than that, there is in the sublimation of the tragedy a prescience of a post-Renaissance epoch significantly parallel to what many of the writers of our own day regard as the inevitable issue of the tragic flaws of the Renaissance world.

Lear, then, is the tragedy not so much

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of an individual as of a civilization. The forces which are aligned with the king and those against him suggest and illuminate the conflicting Weltanschauungs which have dominated the Renaissance era and which perhaps today are locked in crucial and final battle.

More inclusively than almost any other character of the era, Lear embodies, I think, the virtues and shortcomings of our Renaissance civilization, especially as it has evolved in the democratic countries of Great Britain, France, and the United States, whose societies are attempted developments of the humanistic tradition of the early Renaissance. Lear's life on the whole has been humane; his rule has been firm and just. The testimony is in the veneration in which the "good" characters of the play hold him. Cordelia, Gloucester, and the Fool are devoted to him because of his majesty and magnanimity; and Kent, whose considered loyalty stands in such contrast to the unprincipled obsequiousness of Oswald, has "ever honour'd [him] as my king, / Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd, / As my great patron thought on in my prayers." Moreover, the incipient ruthlessness of Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall has remained impotent under the stern hand of Lear's kingship. Lear, like the democracies, has stood in the main for an ordered world full of good intentions; he has used his power to promote justice and to reward generous acts. Hence his deep shock when Cordelia repudiates him in the first scene by her flippant, if well-intentioned, literalism of affection. Lear's subsequent bitterness arises, I think, not because of a frustrated desire to be flattered but because of his feeling that a whole order of society, an entire system of public justice, has been irresponsibly shattered. The shock, like Hamlet's, is not introver-

sive and personal; it reverberates with almost cosmic implications. Hence Lear's disclaimer of "paternal care" by "the sacred radiance of the sun" and the "mysteries of Hecate." Hence, too, his later curses on Goneril and Regan, his entreaties to Nature and to the gods to implement through punishment the civilized order of which he had regarded himself the earthly guarantor. Hence also his madness; for the swiftness and extremity of its course are sensitive indexes of the extent of his devotion to and confidence in the ordered world which he had felt to be so secure and so just. The premise of the play is, therefore, that Lear was a civilized Renaissance man, who cherished steadily those humane qualities which are incarnated for us in Cordelia and who utilized his authority as king beneficently, if too often injudiciously, for his people's welfare.

Yet such a pattern of goodness was not enough to save Lear from the "wheel of fire," nor has it been enough to save the democracies from a similar experience. In both there are similar tragic flaws which make them "in the general censure take corruption / From that particular fault," (to use Hamlet's language) and render them vulnerable to characters and nations more calculating than they. Lear's fundamental weakness is a kind of presumptuousness or arrogance, the like of which is so often the subject of Greek tragedy; but its constituents are Renaissance rather than Greek in character. It consists of a sort of naïveté regarding human nature and institutions—a naïveté which Shakespeare has repeatedly pointed through the Fool, who knows so sadly what depths of evil men are recurrently capable of reaching and who sings so pathetically of the wide presence of "That . . . which serves and seeks for gain." It is

this naïveté, too, which Kent has essentially in mind when he pleads "See better, Lear," and which allows Lear such a credulous reliance on a social order that its sudden collapse seems to him a demoniac miracle and plunges him into a groping and cynical madness. For Lear felt civilization, as have so many in the democracies, to be rooted more deeply in the human imagination, to be fixed more unconditionally in human responses, than the twentieth century has shown it to be. Accordingly, that he may "unburdened crawl toward death," he resigns irresponsibly his authority, supposing that he may keep all the addictions of a king, receive all the affectionate care due a father, and have all the veneration as an aged man which a civilized society customarily presupposes. The fatal issue of his naïveté, however, is his divorcing of power and values by giving the kingdom to those whose integrity is unproved. The result is, as Kent later ironically points out, that his kingship is reduced to the mere look of authority in his face, while rats like Oswald wear the swords. Like the democracies, Lear trusted that civilization would continue largely through its own momentum. By delivering power into the hands of "smiling rogues" who wear no "honesty," he ignored what Mr. Herbert Agar has declared in his *A Time for Greatness* to be the ignorance of the democracies: "The whole of human life has proved that order cannot be maintained unless there is willingness to use force, that justice cannot be promoted unless there is order, that peace cannot exist unless there is justice." And thus, as Lear is quickly stripped of his prerogatives as king, father, and aged man, as he finds himself powerless before the onslaught of forces which he had done much to create, he can only pass from

naïveté to deep bewilderment and mad confusion. Is there elsewhere in literature a clearer parallel to the tragic mood among civilized peoples in the 1930's?

Lear has further shortcomings, of course; but they are not so basic as his assumption that his "dear goddess, nature," has predisposed men to altruism and social justice. His obvious preference for Cordelia, his repeated shows of affection toward her, the "unconstant starts" and "infirmity of his age," all explain, though they do not justify, the treatment that Goneril and Regan are immediately inclined to accord him. They are secondary and symptomatic frailties, not radical defects of character. Yet one other of his tragic weaknesses is pertinent here: his identification of the humane with "all the large effects That troop with majesty." It is the identification which a hundred years ago Thoreau saw insinuating itself into the mind of Western civilization and which he protested as enervating a healthy society. Before the purgatorial heath scenes Lear argues with Goneril that man's life is distinguished from beasts' by just such privileges as having a superfluous number of retainers: "Allow not nature more than nature needs, Man's life is cheap as beast's." Yet linked to this insistence is a blind indifference to the sufferings of others who lack the bare necessities of life. Somewhat paradoxically, perhaps, after he has seen "unaccommodated man" in his "loop'd and window'd raggedness," Lear is increasingly concerned that the vagabond wretches share in a richness in which he is decreasingly interested. Having shifted his own standard of the humane to an inner quality of mind, he is more generous with external goods. Repentant Gloucester likewise declaims against all "superfluous and lust-dited" men. Their "too little

care," their lack of social imagination, both Lear and Gloucester renounce as a social liability. Their earlier attitude is perhaps uncomfortably close to an attitude which the "have-not" nations with some validity have charged to the democratic countries; and it is more than unfortunate that the awareness of such a fatal weakness had to be enforced both in the play and in our time through an unscrupulous revolt by those who could use the tragic error for their own ends.

Naiveté and complacency thus provided for the temporary delivery, as they have provided for a similar delivery in our time, of a well-intentioned if imperfect civilization into the hands of a coalition of Machiavellians; for Machiavellians, Regan, Goneril, Edmund, Cornwall, and the totalitarian nations all are in their worship of power as the *summum bonum* of life, in their willingness to prostitute all the understandings and bonds that constitute civilization for the sake of immediate and tangible gains. Machiavellian they are because, in spite of all the apologies for Machiavelli on the grounds of historical necessity and political objectivity, *The Prince* remains the classic statement of *Realpolitik* and because it "justifies" the degradation of individual and private dignities for the sake of a state and its leaders whose only criterion need be self-perpetuating efficiency.

Lear's antagonists, moreover, like Lear, are Renaissance characters remarkably similar to those who today have led the revolt against civilization. Edmund is their philosophic spokesman. His "goddess, nature," is not the same "nature, dear goddess," whom Lear implores; for to Edmund nature is not the underlying predisposition of man to social unity as Lear had supposed but a jungle of "red tooth and claw," the only

reality in which is the struggle for survival. Regarding all laws, bonds, and traditions of civilization as unreal superstructures, as the mere "curiosity of nations," he will "have lands by wit," for "All with me's meet that I can fashion fit." His lineal descendant is the Nazi spokesman, Dr. Hans Frank, who similarly declared in 1939:

Right is whatever profits a nation; wrong is whatever harms it. Pale phantoms of objective justice do not exist for us any more. . . . The decisive principle is, who is stronger . . . has better nerves? Whoever does not admit this is a pale theorist.

Yet, like the aggressor nations today and thoroughly in accord with Machiavellian precept, Edmund can use the language and trust of civilized people for his own purpose; he can rail to his father against parricides and suavely say to Cornwall, "I shall serve you, sir, / Truly, however else." Cornwall also can use the language of civilization, as when he seizes on Edmund as a nature "of deep trust" and indignantly and repeatedly calls Gloucester a traitor for befriending Lear; and he uses it with such incongruity that a grotesque irony results. In both Edmund and Cornwall the social instrument of language has become a social liability and a mockery. Yet Cornwall's barbarism is different from Edmund's. Cornwall lacks Edmund's lucid intelligence and rationalized goals. He owes his pre-eminence not to "wit" but to inheritance, and he stands as a prototype of the stolid, humorless, and privileged bully, who, insensitive and unimaginative, becomes a sadistic monster toward his betters when they fall into his hands. Goneril and Regan, too, are essentially creatures of Cornwall's primitive caliber, sensual and treacherous. But, as they suggest that Gloucester's eyes be plucked out and that he "smell his way to

Dover," they seem indeed to surpass the Goering-like callousness of Cornwall in their feline vindictiveness. Between the aggrieved inhumanity of Edmund and the impulsive bestiality of Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall, much of the range and character of modern barbarism is to be found.

Shakespeare, however, did not merely sense and portray the tragic vulnerability and the potential barbarism that were implicit in the individualism and in the social relationships of the emergent Renaissance culture which he saw about him; he also presaged something of the character of a succeeding era. For *Lear*, more than any other Shakespearean tragedy, has that element of discovery which Aristotle declared to be of utmost dramatic purport and which, in a more inclusive sense than that employed by Aristotle, Maxwell Anderson has of late concluded to be the very essence of tragedy. The discovery, says Mr. Anderson, must effect the "spiritual awakening and regeneration" of the hero; and therefore it alters the direction of the action and dictates the end of the play. In *Lear* Edgar's words, "Ripeness is all," echo through the last scenes as Gloucester and Lear discover that "The art of our necessities is strange / And can make vile things precious" and are driven to conclusions about humanity and the humane vastly different from those views which they held in the early scenes of the play.

After the old protective bonds of family and society are broken, Lear agonizes through the heath scenes to a new basis of security. Holding the mirror up to nature, Shakespeare does not lead the old king systematically to some pat and sudden conversion accompanied by a rhetorical manifesto. For, like Gloucester, Lear wavers in his convictions as to which one of several attitudes affords the

greatest hope and security in a lawless world. To him there appear to be three possibilities. At times he finds solace in a kind of stoic patience which endures by self-sufficiency, by isolating one's self in an emotional passiveness or control that is impervious to both hope and fear. Hence Lear's recurrent resolutions: "I will be the pattern of all patience," "I will endure," "Patience I need." At other times a note of vengeance is uppermost, and Lear in Old Testament mood trusts that some Jahveh will reassert the validity of his old order by meting out retributive justice on his evil enemies. Hence his pleas to the "great gods" to "Find out their enemies now"; hence his illusions that he is living in a poetically just society where Goneril and Regan can be arraigned before learned justicers and made to atone for their violation of family bonds; hence his vow, "I will punish home." Yet, finally, I think, Gloucester and Lear trust neither in mere endurance nor in the attainment of justice. Neither self-sufficiency nor Jahveh affords an adequate guaranty for the future; for many of their speeches and their actions in the last scenes of the play emphasize the interdependence of men in an inscrutable universe. With Shakespeare's contemporary, John Donne, they recognize that "any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind."

Correlated in their "ripeness" with this new sense of men's interdependence is a comprehension of their own human fallibility, of the incidental character of human amenities, and of the insecurity of political and social structures before the unconquered irrationality of man. Hence Lear, who has sardonically refused to kneel before his daughter in the first scenes of the play, bows before Cordelia and prays her to "forget and forgive; I

am old and foolish," adding that he "should e'en die with pity to see another thus." On the heath, before madness encompassed his mind, he insists that his Fool shall precede him into the hovel, and from the "one part in my heart / That's sorry yet for thee" he includes in his prayer all "Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are." Both Lear and Gloucester not only assert the obligation of the fortunate to aid the unfortunate but also conclude that it is only through man's brotherhood that heaven's justice is realized. Lear's "Take physic, pomp, / That thou mayst shake the superflux to them, / And show the heavens more just" is echoed by Gloucester's "Heavens, deal so still; / Let the superfluous and lust-dited man / That slaves your ordinance, that will not see / Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly." And Edgar, who evidences an increasing wisdom as the tragedy deepens around him, bespeaks the same necessity of lightening the burden of suffering around him through human unity; "Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind," he says after seeing his father's misery. Later he characterizes himself as "A most poor man . . . / Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows, / Am pregnant to good pity."

Passages thus separated from their context, of course, can easily belie the total impression or focal tendency of a play; but the very reiteration of such similar convictions in conjunction with the course of the final scenes affords strong evidence, I believe, of the nature of Lear's and Gloucester's discovery. Certainly, the conclusion of their lives, with Gloucester's heart bursting "smilingly" and Lear preferring a prison with Cordelia's love to the pomp and hatred of a wider world, suggests that any life which they might look forward to would

be "pregnant with good pity." Having experienced the extremities of human wretchedness by reason of the fallibility of social institutions which keep human barbarism so insecurely in check, they would not again find the essence of the humane in the "superflux" but rather in the "good pity" which offers the surest hope of ameliorating human ills. It is this note which affords the sublimation of the tragedy. What else remains to refute Kent's judgment of the course of events: "All's cheerless, dark, and deadly," or Swinburne's somber words on the last scene, "Here is the grove of the Eumenides; here is the darkness everlasting"?

If *Lear* is essentially a Renaissance tragedy, as I have tried to suggest it is, there is also much in modern literature to suggest that its "ripeness" is our "ripeness." Such contemporaries as Saint-Exupéry, Silone, and Auden, if I read them aright, have, after sharing in part Lear's illusions, arrived at convictions closely akin to those of Lear and Gloucester. In his *Flight to Arras*, Saint-Exupéry has elaborated upon his discovery that "no man can act without involving other men. . . . An isolated individual does not exist." He has found Man greater than men and "Charity. . . . the sacrifice granted Man for the purpose of his own fulfilment." Silone, disillusioned with the Party, in *The Seed beneath the Snow* has exalted friendship as opposed to "connections," simple integrity and good will among individuals as opposed to calculated designs for power and reliance on political structures, as the surest bases for a humane future. His love of the poor, like Lear's, is not a patronizing benevolence but an understanding affection for all who suffer, especially for those who have no power (that is, the poor) and who have

nothing to give in return but a similar devotion. As Silone's spokesman, Pietro, says,

This love for the poor has been my salvation. . . . I don't pity the poor, . . . I haven't the feelings of a charitable lady patroness of some benevolent institution nor do I approach them from a political point of view. . . . My reason for loving the poor, aside from my instinctive feeling of brotherhood with them, is that I think they are the last abode of truth.

(And so Lear found on the heath.) Auden in *The Double Man* has at once posited the imminent end of the Renaissance era of prudent individualism and the economic man, and the inevitability of a succeeding age of charity:

. . . all the special tasks begun
By the Renaissance are done

Each recognizes what Lear saw
The *homo* Thurber likes to draw,

We need to love all since we are
Each a unique particular
That is no giant, god, or dwarf,
But one odd human isomorph.

Whatever the validity of such assumptions, they echo *Lear*. In the prophetic pattern of his tragedy Shakespeare was alone, I think, among his contemporaries. He would not find himself so today.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH: IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN CRITICAL THEORY

B. R. MCELDERRY, JR.¹

The social problem which made the Joabs of national significance in 1939 has disappeared or changed its form. The artistic problem of their chronicle remains. Now, as in 1939, the devil asks the conundrum of the workshop: "It's clever, but is it art?" To literary students the question is important, for it seems likely that in the generation to come we shall have more rather than less of propaganda literature. And, since events of the last five years have altered our perspective as much as might ordinarily be expected in a generation, it is worth while just now to reconsider the ablest production of one of our ablest novelists.

The attempt is the more timely, because of the present emphasis on critical

values and methods. In discussing *The Grapes of Wrath*, I am going to use a number of ideas found in two recent books of critical theory published by the Princeton University Press; they are *The Intent of the Critic* and *The Intent of the Artist*. (The distinction of the titles is unimportant, for even an artist turns critic when he talks about his art.) Each of these books is in form a symposium, with no great unity of plan. Though not intended to be a consistent body of doctrine, these books do bring together conveniently a number of ideas actually operative in the making and reading of contemporary literature. If, then, we take these ideas, we have a tangible basis for evaluating the novel; and, conversely, we have our experience with the novel as a check on the theories.

First, let us consider the old question

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of the basic relationship of art and reality, a point most fully discussed by Mr. Centeno in his Introduction to *The Intent of the Artist*. He asserts that there are two theories of art: art is an irreducible activity, a love activity complete within itself and justified by its own existence; or art is merely a pleasanter way of representing materials found in purer form elsewhere. Of these two theories, Mr. Centeno prefers the first; in fact, he denies the validity of the second. According to which theory, then, was *The Grapes of Wrath* written? Or does either theory sufficiently account for the novel?

It is certainly true that Steinbeck does seem in a sense to be in love with his characters and with the living tissue of their experience. One thinks of Tom Joad going home from prison, of his welcome when he finds his family the next morning, of Granpa's funeral at the roadside. Such scenes do illustrate Mr. Centeno's observation that an artist is "a man who cannot separate himself from livingness." Parenthetically, I may remark that I do not consider "livingness" a term of great beauty; but as a paraphrase for "vividness" it at least avoids the hackneyed, smooth-worn quality of that overused term.

Yet in spite of the "livingness," or the love of life, embodied in Steinbeck's depiction of scene and character, it is true that parts of the novel—the rage against the bankers of Oklahoma, the camp life of the Okies in California, the fruit-ranch strike—may fairly be described as a "pleasanter" representation of facts to be found in purer form elsewhere. Carey McWilliams' *Factories in the Fields*, a contemporary work of popular economics and sociology, affords convenient comparison. In factual truth McWilliams' work is fuller and more authentic; though at the same time Steinbeck's

novel is more lively, or, to use Mr. Centeno's angular term, more full of "livingness." The novel might thus be said to illustrate both the theories of art described by Mr. Centeno. Yet Mr. Centeno has presented these two theories as mutually exclusive; in so far as the novel competes with *Factories in the Fields*, he would say, it is false and unsatisfactory as a work of art.

Further on in his discussion, however, we find Mr. Centeno asserting that "the work of art is not meant to be a corroboration of our sense of experience, but an expansion of it." Now, obviously, the sense of experience must be corroborated before it can be expanded. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, for instance, the foreclosures of Oklahoma, the camp life of California, and the fruit-ranch strike must be made plausible before their effect on the characters becomes of interest. Thus Mr. Centeno's original statement of the two theories as opposed and mutually exclusive seems misleading. It illustrates, I believe, the favorite academic sin of thinking in categories instead of in dynamics. If *The Grapes of Wrath* is a bad novel, it cannot reasonably be condemned on the grounds that it is sociological. It would be impossible to write a novel on the Okies that would not be sociological. It is possible, however, that the sociology might be inartistically presented or that the sociology might be bad to begin with.

Before proceeding further with this basic issue, let us consider the related point of unity—an old requirement for a work of art. To the familiar idea of the vital relationship between author, subject, and reader, Mr. Centeno introduces a new subtlety of terminology. Thus the intent of the artist is distinguished from his intentions. His intentions are conscious, willed purposes; while the intent,

subconscious and innate, is represented as more deeply vital, and hence especially characteristic of the masterpiece.

In terms of *The Grapes of Wrath*, I take this distinction to mean something like this. Steinbeck's intention was to write a story of the Joad family in its struggle to adapt itself to new, unfavorable conditions. In carrying out this conscious intention and in writing the various scenes which represent subintentions, Steinbeck's real interest—his subconscious motivation—is to express his basic faith in mankind, in the courage, the endurance, and the kindness of people like the Joads, and to show their passionate yearning for opportunity and for justice. It is the presence of this intent which gives power to the intention—that is, if one concedes that the novel is successful.

The content of the work of art, says Mr. Centeno, must be formally organized in accordance with the creative intent. Thus, in *The Grapes of Wrath* the first quarter of the volume concerns preparations for the trip west; the second quarter, the trip itself, and the latter half, the sequence leading to Tom's escape, Al's engagement, and the birth of Rosasharn's baby. This cycle of events, I believe, is adequate to embody the intent: Steinbeck's feeling for the fundamental nature of his characters.

The relation of the work of art to the reader or audience is termed by Mr. Centeno its "extent." In securing extent—or perhaps one might substitute the common phrase "reader-interest"—the intent must not be sacrificed or impaired. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, it might be a question as to whether the freedom of language is always essential to the intent, or whether a few "sons-of-bitches" are sometimes thrown in to increase the extent of the book among

certain readers. More seriously, some passages might be considered as direct propaganda and hence a distraction from the basic intent. My own conclusion, based on a fourth reading of the novel, is that it does have "integral creative oneness," in Mr. Centeno's exact but cumbersome phrase. The intent seems to me clear and steady; the content well selected, arranged, and proportioned; and the extent, or communication of intent to the reader, is adequate. One notable exception is the concluding detail in which Rosasharn gives her breast to the starving stranger. This incident, clearly symbolic of the basic intent, is, nevertheless, not sufficiently plausible to communicate it. Coming at the very end of the novel, the incident is an important exception. This, and perhaps a few other details aside, however, the novel remains "interesting," not "exteresting," in Mr. Centeno's use of these terms. In the historical sense any novel about the Okies would be exteresting if it contained something of factual or sociological truth. But a novel on this subject would be interesting only if it were felt integrally—that is, if it had inner unity. Such an inner unity I believe *The Grapes of Wrath* has.

Turning to *The Intent of the Critic*, we find in Mr. Ransom's discussion of poetry two ideas which may, I think, be adapted to the discussion of the novel. First, says Mr. Ransom, "a poem is more than its paraphrase." Now, in the loose sense of the term, anything printed or spoken is more than its paraphrase; but the implication of Mr. Ransom's statement is that a poem must, in the actual line-for-line reading of it, create itself. The means by which it does this, he says, are its structure and texture; these, then, are the proper—or most important—considerations for the critic.

That structure is as valuable to a novel

as it is to a poem is well illustrated by *The Grapes of Wrath*. Yet it has not been sufficiently recognized, I think, that *The Grapes of Wrath*—like the *Odyssey*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*—is formulated as a journey. This structural device—one of the simplest, oldest, and most vital in literature—is well suited to the theme or intent of the story: the search for opportunity and justice. This, I believe, will be generally admitted. The ending of the story, however (not the Rosasharn incident previously mentioned, but the final disposition of the characters), has been severely criticized. I remember a friend of mine saying: "It doesn't *have* any ending." This, he felt, was a defect in the novel which clearly revealed the author's incompetence. But the lack of an ending in any final sense is in keeping with the basic idea of the novel. The continued faith in the search, in spite of failure to find opportunity and justice, is far more effective than a trumped-up ending (such as the conclusion to *Robinson Crusoe*) would be. In a way, the uncompleted journey toward opportunity and justice is parallel to the modern tragedy, which decrees life, not death, for its hero.

Of the texture of a novel it is difficult to speak without long extracts. Several points, however, may be indicated briefly. There is the dialogue, with its rich, illiterate idiom; the description—set pieces, like the turtle crossing the road, and details which help us realize such a scene as the government camp; narrative episodes, such as the desert ride; and dramatic scenes, such as the burning of Hooverville. One may say that the texture is varied; that the pace is swift; that the story is fully rather than barely told. And one may say that the temptation to skip—even in re-reading—seldom appears.

A special problem is presented by the notable interludes, which treat the background of the Joads' experience: the opening chapter, descriptive of the dust bowl; the sale of household goods and the purchase of secondhand cars, set forth in a strangely generalized but vivid dialogue; the decay of the vacant houses; and the chaos of U.S. Highway 66. Of the thirty chapters in the novel, fourteen are interludes of this sort, though they occupy less than a hundred of its six hundred pages. They are Steinbeck's chief departure from conventional technique, and obviously they are a departure only in degree. Novelists have always felt free to elaborate the physical and social setting of the story. Steinbeck's interludes enrich the texture of his novel, and they do it far more subtly than, say, the moral essays of Fielding; or the "Dear Reader" passages of Dickens and Thackeray; or, to come closer to date, the elaborate author-interpretation of Galsworthy. To change the basis of comparison, the interludes have much the same justification and effectiveness as the familiar "long shots" of the movies. Of the fourteen interludes, only five are bare and direct social criticism voiced by the author rather than his characters. These are the conception of the soulless banks and corporations in chapter v; the concept of Manself as opposed to ownership in chapter xiv; the history of landownership in California; the Californian suspicion of the Okies; and the indictment of waste under the profit system. In defense of these passages it may be said that they comprise barely twenty-five pages of the six hundred-page novel; that they are so spaced as to bear upon the story itself (for example, the history of landownership in California comes just before the Joads enter Hooverville); that their literate

eloquence points up the colloquial tone of the book as a whole. Leave these passages out, and something valuable, something pertinent, is gone.

Approval of the novel on the basis of its structure and texture, however, would not satisfy Mr. Norman Foerster, whose essay sets up ethical considerations as equally important with aesthetic ones. It is, he says, the business of the artist to achieve aesthetic and ethical values together, in whatever way he can; it is the business of the critic to distinguish between these values. From poetry he gives two brief examples of such discrimination. Of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" he says that it "is great aesthetically; as we have come increasingly to see, it is ethically vital, but unsound; in sum, this poem is a superb expression of unwise-dom." And of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" Mr. Foerster remarks that it is "bungling in its art, stereotyped in its wisdom."

Leaving these two judgments to private debate, let us apply the principle to *The Grapes of Wrath*. Is this novel ethically sound? Is it a wise book? And, to revert to an earlier point, is it good sociology? One may guess from his other writings that Mr. Foerster would say "No" to all these questions. For it is undeniable that *The Grapes of Wrath* does embody a strong faith in the natural goodness of man—a doctrine abhorrent to Mr. Foerster. In Steinbeck's eyes the Joads are all good people. They may be weakly good, like Pa or Rosasharn; or they may be strongly good, like Ma Joad and Tom. But their ill fortune is never represented as due to their own tragic flaws. Conversely, all persons in power or authority—with the exception of the director of the government camp—are represented as evil. Greed creates fear, and fear creates injustice. As Steinbeck

himself puts it: "The quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I,' and cuts you off forever from the 'We.'"

One may admit much truth in this simple formula of good and evil and still feel that it is inadequate. The clear implication in the novel that the formula is complete, is disquieting. It arouses a suspicion that the characters—vivid as they are—are only half-truths, too. This is the more plausible, since all the real characters are drawn from one level of society. We follow the action steadily from the point of view of the Okies. People of other social strata are presented as enemies, portrayed in a single aspect, never seen from the inside.

Is this, perhaps, the clue to Edmund Wilson's comment (in *The Intent of the Critic*) that Steinbeck's novels represent almost the exact line between good and bad art? *The Grapes of Wrath* is a shrewd novel, a lively pattern of experience, varied and skilful in texture; but it may be attacked as basically sentimental. Ma Joad's remark, so effectively used to provide an ending for the Hollywood version of the story, expresses the fundamental weakness: "Rich fellas come up an' they die, and their kids ain't no good, an' they die out. But, Tom, we keep a-comin'. Don't you fret, Tom. A different time's comin'." The poor struggle for riches, success, power; but those who achieve them die out. Life is, then, a sort of squirrel cage or treadmill. Such a view gives no basis for faith in a brighter future. The assertion that the brighter future is coming—stated by Ma Joad and implied by Steinbeck—is thus mere sentimental optimism. This is a fault, by the way, ascribed to Steinbeck's more recent novel, *The Moon Is Down*.

Yet, as someone remarked, the epithet "sentimental" may easily be used as a club to beat people we don't like. I have

no desire to use it as such, for the truth is that most English and American novelists are sentimental. We are a sentimental people, and when we rebel against conventional sentiment we get sentiment in reverse à la James T. Farrell or à la Ernest Hemingway. Or, to take more comparable material, consider for a moment Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*. Is the spectacle of total depravity offered in this production more intelligent and therefore less sentimental than the natural goodness of the downtrodden implied in *The Grapes of Wrath*? In short, while I believe that sentimentality is a valid charge against *The Grapes of Wrath*, I do not believe it is a very important one; for the sentimentality, so far as it exists, rests on an incomplete view of life, not upon frustration.

The importance of a positive quality in literature is interestingly touched upon by W. H. Auden in what I regard as the most notable essay in these two Princeton volumes. Mr Auden bravely essays the difficult mission of prophecy, and in doing so he puts life first and art second. Emphasizing the interdependence of ethics, science, politics, and aesthetics, he asserts that "the attempt to make aesthetics an autonomous province has resulted in academic aesthetics, and the substitution of the pedant for the priest." In place of such exclusive specialization, the democratic society requires increasing skill in communication; for the essence of democracy, he says, is to work toward an increasingly "open" society. By an "open" society he means one in which talent and ideas have free flow.

Though Mr. Auden in this essay is prescribing for the critic, this conception of the "open" society has considerable bearing on the proper nature of art. It may be said, for instance, that *The Grapes of Wrath* is a novel vigorously sympathetic to the "open" society. The novel skilfully communicates attitudes of a relatively inarticulate group or type. It enthusiastically bridges the gap between art, politics, and ethics, making most unhappy the pedantic student of aesthetics, intent on playing the old static game of categories. In short, *The Grapes of Wrath* was not merely a timely book on itinerant farm laborers; it was—and is—creative in the best sense. Sentimentality may impair, but does not cancel, its value. The sociological content of the novel, far from making it an "impure" work of art, as Mr. Centeno might wish us to believe, has, in fact, made it a more vital work of art.

In making these tentative applications of critical theory, I have carefully refrained from prophesying immortality for Steinbeck's novel. It may be, indeed, that we have arrived at an epoch in which literary immortality will be unattainable. So many books are published; so few, even of the best, are re-read; and there are so many reading publics almost independent of one another that the dominance required to establish a classic is steadily more difficult to achieve. But, if classics are to emerge from the first forty years of this century, I can think of not more than a dozen novels in America that are so likely or such fit candidates for that measure of immortality.

THOMAS CARLYLE'S USE OF METAPHOR

MARY B. DEATON¹

Thomas Carlyle wrote of his father:

None of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from the untutored Soul; full of metaphors . . . with all manner of potent words, . . . brief, energetic; and which I should say conveyed the most perfect picture, definite, clear, not in ambitious *colours* but in full *white* sunlight, of all the dialects I have ever listened to. Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible, which did not become almost ocularly so.²

Like father, like son, this gift of metaphor, of rendering ocular both the abstract and the concrete. Indeed, in what Thomas Carlyle called "this last excellence" (descriptive power), for which he praises Robert Burns, he himself excelled. That Carlyle so consciously admired the use of metaphor in others might indicate a too conscious effort on his part to achieve a similar vivid style of expression. However, he no doubt satirizes this tendency in himself, when, taking the part of the conventional critic, at the close of *Sartor Resartus*, he half-satirizes, half-apologizes for his hero Teufelsdröckh: "What a result, should this piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style of writing, not to say of thinking, become general among our Literary Men!"³ For Teufelsdröckh had earlier remarked that metaphors are the "stuff of Language." "Examine Language," he said, "[and] what, if you ex-

cept some few primitive elements (of natural sound), what is it all but metaphors . . . its muscles and tissues, and living integuments?"⁴

Carlyle's pages are rich in pictures of things and thoughts. It is chiefly in *Sartor Resartus* that he "lards the lean earth" with the "entangled, hyper-metaphorical style"; and, since he is himself aware of this style, it may be fair to assume he felt that a history of a Diogenes Teufelsdröckh justified the treatment used. Elsewhere with Carlyle—and, for that matter, even in *Sartor*—it seems that metaphor (to borrow phrases from J. M. Murry) "has become a mode of apprehensions," "the unique expression of [his] individual vision." "With him the faculty of using metaphor is as simple and direct as the faculty of saying 'Blue' is to the ordinary man when he sees a mid-summer sky."⁵

In every essay Carlyle does make his reader see with him and thus feel with him. Sometimes he uses only a word or a phrase to flash a picture before the eye or to make the abstract concrete. Sometimes an extended or moving picture dramatizes a scene or idea. The comparison of one thing with another is sometimes implied, sometimes expressed. Sometimes the figure of speech is old, with a new touch to enliven it; often it is new and startling. Frequently it is borrowed, particularly from the Bible or Shakespeare; more frequently it rises

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² Thomas Carlyle, *Selections from the Writings of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. Allen Rogers Benham (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928), Introd., p. xiv.

³ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* ("Modern Students Library" ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's, 1921), p. 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵ The quoted phrases, though not their application to Carlyle, are borrowed from John Middleton Murry's *The Meaning of Style*.

"glowing from the heart" of the author, and it is no disparagement to call it "Carlylese."

From the gallery of single pictures or ideas called forth by a word or phrase we have two, often quoted, which Carlyle himself must have liked, since he used them more than once: "lynx-eyed acuteness" and "broken-winged thinker." Equally interesting are "prostrate admiration," "hungry anticipation," and "spiritual paralysis." The adjectives in the first two phrases above usually describe a physical state rather than an emotional or mental state. In the latter, the reverse is true. Louis the Unforgotten, Carlyle also calls "a very Solecism Incarnate," drawing his figure from rhetoric. But literature is a "froth ocean." London is a "monstrous tuberosity of Civilized Life," and Coleridge is "a meandering human discourse." The first suggests that ugly abnormal growth which London seemed to him; and, in the second, "meandering" suggests not only wandering but continual wandering.

Carlyle may use one word to suggest an idea, while elsewhere he uses an extended figure based on the same comparison. In "Realized Ideals" he speaks of our "fictile World"; in "Labour" he extends the figure from the art of pottery-making: "And fancy the most assiduous Potter, but without his wheel; reduced to make dishes or rather amorphous botches, by mere kneading and baking. Even such a Potter were Destiny."⁶

Borrowings from Shakespeare and the Bible are frequently used to vivify Carlyle's writings. From the former we have "All things were fallen into the yellow

leaf"⁷ to add to his description of the "decrepit, death-sick era" of Samuel Johnson. In praise of laughter he plagiarizes when he says: "The man who cannot laugh is not only *fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils*; but his whole life is already a treason and a stratagem."⁸ He borrows and adds insult to infancy in "When thou thyself, a watery, pulpy, slobbery freshman and newcomer in this Planet sattest *muling and puking in thy nurse's arms*, sucking thy coral."⁹ Gretchen, the foster-mother of Teufelsdröckh, was "won like Desdemona by the deeds rather than the looks of her now veteran Othello."¹⁰ For her foster-son "did the world become mine oyster, which [he], by strength or cunning, was to open as [he] would and could."¹¹ To us who might underrate Louis the Unforgotten, Carlyle warns in borrowed terms: "And yet let no meanest man *lay flattering uncation* to his soul. Louis was a Ruler."¹² And again he borrows from Hamlet in saying "Foolish enough, how some slight, perhaps even mean and ugly incident, . . . will fix itself in a susceptive memory, and lie ennobled there; silvered over with the pale cast of thought."¹³

From the Bible he utilizes figures to illumine his pages—as who does not! "Society," Teufelsdröckh says, "sails through the Infinite on Cloth, as on a Faust's Mantle, or rather like the *Sheet of clean and unclean beasts* in the Apostle's Dream";¹⁴ or again, "For long years had the poor Hebrew, in this Egypt of an Ausculatatorship, painfully toiled baking bricks without stubble."¹⁵

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁷ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹² Thomas Carlyle, *Selections*, ed. Benham, p. 114.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁴ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Readings in English Prose of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Alden (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), p. 383.

And "Our wilderness is the wild World in an Atheistic Century; our Forty Days are long years of suffering and fasting."¹⁶ In the essay on "Labour" Carlyle compares "the faithfullest" of us to "unprofitable servants."

Carlyle borrows freely, then, from greater writers, though he usually pays them back with interest. And, furthermore, he takes language which he calls "quite pallid, hunger-bitten, and dead looking"¹⁷ and makes it glow into the flush of health, though, as he adds, "not without an apoplectic tendency."¹⁸ In "the materials are to be fished up from the weltering deep, and down from the shimmering air,"¹⁹ the phrase "fished up" can hardly be called figurative any more; but is there not new life to it when he adds "and down from the shimmering air"? Teufelsdröckh's book is a "Sea of Thought"—no new metaphor in Carlyle's day even, until he added "wherein the toughest pearl-diver may dive to his utmost depth and return not only with sea-wrack but with true Orients."²⁰ Nor was "Torch of Science" new to the Victorians. Yet in the opening paragraph of *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle draws out the figure and opens up its possibilities when he ridicules the scientists and would-be scientists, the philosophers and would-be philosophers of the day:

Considering our present advanced state of culture, and how the Torch of Science has now been brandished and borne about, with more or less effect, for five thousand years and upwards; how, in these times especially, not only the Torch still burns, and perhaps more fiercely than ever, but innumerable Rush-lights, and Sulphur-matches, kindled therat, are also glancing in every direction, so that not the smallest cranny or doghole in Nature or Art can remain unilluminated,—it might strike the reflective mind with some surprise that

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

hitherto little or nothing of a fundamental character, whether in the way of Philosophy or History, has been written on the subject of Clothes.²¹

The usual "hunger at his heels" becomes "Hunger always parallel to him," intensifying the figure as it changes it.²² Sin and Remorse are forever forces against which the world wars, though in Carlyle's "Burns" they constitute not a mere army but a "leprosous armada."²³ Rivers, streams, and oceans are fertile (if waters may be described as fertile) sources for the coiner of figures, trite ones mostly, but not trite with Carlyle in:

The river of [Teufelsdröckh's] History, which we have traced from its tiniest fountains, and hoped to see flow onward, with increasing current, into the ocean, here dashes itself over that terrific Lover's Leap; and, as a mad-foaming cataract, flies wholly into tumultuous clouds of spray! Low down it indeed collects again into pools and plashes; yet only at a great distance, and with difficulty, if at all, into a general stream.²⁴

It is to be expected that the son of a "hard-handed" Scotch peasant should draw many of his figures from the homely life of such a group as that from which he sprang, and Carlyle does draw many interesting figures from that life. Of Boswell's capacity for hero-worship and loyalty in Johnson's time Carlyle said: "A precious medicine lay hidden in the floods of coarsest, most composite treacle; the world swallowed the treacle, for it suited the world's palate; and now after half a century may the medicine begin to show itself."²⁵ If not Carlyle's father, certainly his mother, often made a bitter

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²² Carlyle, *Selections*, p. 67.

²³ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 139.

²⁴ "Boswell's Johnson" in *Readings in English Prose of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 341.

medicine more palatable to the young Thomas in a sweet treacle. "[Johnson's] recompense in solid pudding was not excessive,"²⁵ but "to many a Royal Society the creation of a World is little more mysterious than the cooking of a dumpling."²⁶ "Young Rusticity and Other Raw Produce" Carlyle saw no less frequently than did his hero, Teufelsdröckh. The finite is linked to the infinite for any country-bred child in "Who is there that can clutch into the wheel spokes of Destiny, and say to the Spirit of the Time: Turn back?"²⁷ "Wretchedness cowering into truckle-beds"²⁸ is more easily visualized by one who has actually seen the child's bed rolled under the parent's bed, for then he also sees wretchedness "yielding obsequiously."

From more miscellaneous fields are other Carlyle metaphors, vivid likenesses, and comparisons: "This Work on Clothes . . . like all works of genius, like the very Sun, has nevertheless black spots . . . amid its effulgence,"²⁹ for "of [Teufelsdröckh's] sentences perhaps not more than nine-tenths stand straight on their legs."³⁰ In defending Burns, Carlyle uses a mathematical comparison in an extended figure:

[The world] decides . . . less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the ratio of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a gin horse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are

measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the gin horse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them. Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burns, Swifts. . . .³¹

This same point is further emphasized in another figure immediately following the above:

Granted, the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.³²

In such a manner when Carlyle feels strongly does he pile up his figures.

Metaphors based on mythology are frequently used. Perhaps it is necessary to cite only one here, one which might be called to the attention of Messrs. Mussolini and Hitler:

When the Phoenix is fanning her funeral pyre, will there not be sparks flying! Alas, some millions of men, and among them such as a Napoleon, have already been licked into that high-eddy flame, and like moths consumed there. Still also have we to fear that incautious beards will get singed.³³

Another extended contrast is the well-known "Such a minnow is Man"³⁴ passage, which it is not necessary to add here.

It is not merely an idea that Carlyle can dramatize for us, but, as in the following, the entire career of a person, for in this is the history of the Du Barry:

What a course was thine: from that first truckle bed (in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother bore thee, with tears, to an unnamed father: forward, through lowest subterranean depths, and over highest sunlit heights of Harlotdom and Rascaldom—to the guillotine-axe, which shears away thy vainly whimpering head.³⁵

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

²⁶ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Did Carlyle perhaps have in mind also the possible Icelandic derivation of "cower": *kura*, "to sleep or doze"?

²⁹ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³¹ "Burns," *Selections*, p. 97.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 210.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³⁵ "Louis the Unforgotten," *Selections*, p. 117.

Here the usual "from highest to lowest" is vividly intensified with "subterranean depths" and "sunlit heights." France becomes "Harlotdom" by the use of a capital letter and the addition of a *-dom* or *-doom*, and the guillotine, with the unconcern of a pair of scissors, "shears away thy vainly whimpering head."

In the preceding quotation is a dramatization of one woman's life. In a still longer passage, in *Sartor Resartus*, is a dramatization of one scene from one man's life—the first appearance of Teufelsdröckh.³⁶ Here the stage is set in "this umbrageous Man's nest"; the leading actor, for the minute, a man of mystery, "a Stranger of reverend aspect"; the minor characters, Andreas Futteral and his wife, and the "invaluable Loan." The unreality of this scene quickly shifts to the real and now, to "the sleeping red-colored Infant." Not so much metaphor is here, but the seeing eye of the author and a drama which the reader sees.

Frequently Carlyle will express a thought in abstract and general terms, as when he tells us Teufelsdröckh's worst

fault is "an almost total want of arrangement," and then immediately picture the idea as "like some mad banquet, wherein all courses had been confounded, and fish and flesh, soup and solid, oyster-sauce, lettuces, Rhine-wine and French mustard were hurled into one tureen."³⁷

In conclusion it is interesting to note how in one passage Carlyle uses a metaphor to depict war, its horror and its ultimate nothingness, and in a second reference strips a metaphor to a bare reality for somewhat the same purpose. The first is that picture of a battlefield in which he describes "those red mold heaps: ay, there lie the Shells of Men, out of which all the Life and Virtue has been blown." In *The French Revolution* he charges "[the people are sent] to fatten battlefields (named 'beds of honour') with their bodies, in quarrels which are not theirs."

Thus it appears that, in a word or in a paragraph or even, shall we say, in a whole *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle has, among other talents, that of making his reader a seer. And because he sees with Carlyle's eyes he discovers "a brave new world" of words and thoughts.

³⁶ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 73.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

A PLEA FOR BETTER ANTHOLOGIES

JOHN J. PARRY¹

Twenty years ago there were few anthologies for the English survey course, and those few that existed were as severely plain and practical as a Model T Ford. Today, when each publisher has at least one and some offer several, there is great competition to see who can intro-

duce some new feature to outdo the others—"sumptuous" editions with brilliantly colored covers stamped in "gold" (which proves to be Dutch metal) and silver, halftone prints, wash drawings, line cuts in the margins, decorative end papers, maps—these last very welcome when they are really reliable but a delu-

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sion and a snare when they label Westmoreland and the West Riding of Yorkshire "The Wadsworth Country," place "The Shakespeare Country" between the Wye and the upper Severn and "The Hardy Country" between Bristol and Oxford, and locate the town of Selkirk farther west than that of Dumfries. About the only lure that has not been tried is fore-edge painting, and we probably would have had that if a cheap way of imitating it had been found.

With this change in format has gone a change in content. Today it is the fashion to write a history of English literature, break it up into "interchapters," and distribute them throughout the volume, thus obviating the need for a separate historical text. In this feature, too, we find the striving for novelty. Each editor strives to outdo his competitors and to impress his colleagues, forgetting that his primary obligation is to the students who will use his book. These authors, addressing themselves to their colleagues—and perhaps to their deans—*recepérunt mercedem suam*, for their colleagues write favorable reviews of the books and adopt them as required texts; but, meanwhile, "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed . . ." I have tried a good many of these anthologies on classes at varying levels, from freshmen to seniors, and the books seem to grow progressively worse as they grow more pretentious. The students are bored by such pomposity as "in contradistinction to the anemic preciosity of the esthetes";² they do not know what is meant by the "apocalyptic splendor" of Carlyle or the "Pisgah-sight" of Smart; and they do not understand how Smart "made words

work three shifts." They are skeptical of the statement that Tennyson "reeked tobacco through his ribs" and are puzzled when told: "The editor of *Fraser's Magazine* was bold enough to serialize *Sartor* in 1833-34, but his readers were not amused." By the time I have laboriously explained the joke—there seem to be a number of versions of this Queen Victoria story, no one of them very well authenticated—it has fallen completely flat, and the students' only reaction is wonder that anyone should expect to be amused by *Sartor*. The solemn pronouncement, "That age [the Romantic period], like our own, was spiritually and morally bankrupt," I consider wholly out of place. It is not the function of the anthologist to pronounce a moral judgment upon his own times; and, since the students do not know exactly what he means by the statement, they are merely confused, and neither their understanding nor their appreciation of the Romantic period is in any way helped by it.

Even more objectionable, in my opinion, are those "fresh treatments of authors" which too often seek the sensational in order to recall the wandering attention of the audience. Too much attention is given to Swinburne's "interest in sexual abnormalities" and his attempts at sin and to his declining years; too much attention to Dickens' diatribe against the Pre-Raphaelites, which the editor admits was not justified but presents just the same. Of one Rossetti article, nearly a third (about two-thirds of a column) is devoted to Rossetti's love for "Guggum"; their long engagement; the fact that "he may not have been entirely faithful to her"; her addiction to laudanum and his to chloral and whiskey; the suspicious circumstances surrounding her death; his grief and remorse; his attendance at séances

² Since my object is to deprecate a tendency, not to attack individuals, I have not given the source of my examples. They are all, however, documented in my copy.

"in a vain attempt to get a message from 'Guggum'"; his hallucinations, "encountering his wronged wife's spirit at every turn and finding her reincarnated in birds and animals"; his "failing eyesight, hypochondria, the 'persecution complex,' insomnia"—all "melancholy milestones [which] mark his descent toward paranoia" and attempted suicide. The editor does admit, somewhat grudgingly, that Rossetti "was still able, on occasion to do magnificent work," but his real interest seems to be in the mental aberrations.³ These are not the things that I want my students to carry away from a study of Rossetti, and yet these are the ones that stand out in the introduction.

Still worse is the characterization of Mrs. Browning, who, we are told, belongs "downstairs in the servants' quarters, where, in company with . . . Robert Montgomery [the students know only one Robert Montgomery], she bangs the crockery about and eats vast handfuls of peas on the point of her knife." I can see no shred of justification for such a caricature; and it forms the worst possible introduction to the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," to which it is prefixed. Yet the anthology which contains all these lapses from good taste has been praised by a reviewer for the "note of authority which sounds throughout the editorial comments and in the excellent footnotes" and is advertised by the publishers as "having given consideration throughout to sophomore needs and sophomore tastes."

But if the anthologists enjoy disporting themselves in the introductions and the interchapters, few of them have any liking for "the dull duties of an editor."

³ Incidentally, it may be noted that Dante Gabriel's brother was not named "William Morris Rossetti."

The selection of the texts does not present much of a problem. There are a certain number of authors and selections which must appear in any anthology; the compiler includes these, adds a few of his own favorites, and the job is done. Copy is probably prepared by cutting up other books and pasting the pages on sheets for the printer. Too often the proofreading also is left to him. I know that, in spite of all efforts, lines will be misplaced and words, even rhyme words, will drop out; but many of the errors are of the type that a careful editor should notice, even if a professional proofreader sees nothing wrong with them. We find in *The Grammarian's Funeral* "Burn [bury] this man there?"; in *Caliban upon Setebos* "Making and marrying [marring] clay"; and in Swinburne's *Vision of Spring in Winter* a reference to "Spring with her foot-ball [foot-fall]." Other errors I have observed are "Ismea [for James] Shirley," "Irene [Ierne]" for Ireland, the crediting (through a wrong heading) of the Authorized Version of the Bible to John Milton, and the explanation that Sansfoy's shield "renversed" is "reversed." In this case the word as well as the shield is reversed.

The annotating of the texts is probably the least inspiring part of the editing, and therefore it is usually the most neglected. I have never seen an anthology prepared for the use of students that was properly annotated. One editor prints seventy-seven pages of Browning's poems with only twelve lines of notes for them; another, on the plea that he thinks annotations clog the reading, prints none except the interpretations of obsolete words. But the usual practice is to write notes on the points that the editor already knows—or thinks he knows—to add a few more from easily accessible reference books, sometimes

half a century out of date, and then to feel that his duty has been done. This explains, I presume, why we are so often told that Virgil was a Roman poet, Venus is the "Goddess of Love," and "Thames is the river upon which London is situated"—information which is not essential to the understanding of the passages annotated—but are left in the dark as to why "Our days of a span long make not one little finger" or what the "mortal right-lined circle" is. And, for the notes that they do write, the knowledge of the editors is not always so adequate as they are inclined to assume. It does no harm, I suppose, to tell the student that "high-piping Pehlevi" is "Sanskrit, the language of Old Persian literature"; that a "blind crowder" is "a player for the crowd"; or that the Toricellean experiment has to do with "the contraction of mercury in a sealed tube." But, when of Lamb's "softer than the lap on which Venus lulled Ascanius," we are told "The son of Hector, put to death after the fall of Troy," we have not only something new in mythology but a note which, even if true, would not explain the passage. All these examples are drawn from a single anthology which the publishers assure us is one of the best.

Many editors believe that any foreign expression can be handled with the help of a lexicon. This is not always true. *De te fabula* may mean "this is your story," but without the background of the quotation much of its force is lost. When Peter in *The Tale of a Tub* pronounces *ex cathedra*, the expression carries a connotation which is not conveyed by "from the bench." And by *jure paterno* Swift does not mean "by the father's oath"; nor is his *altum silentium*, "primeval silence," although this explanation persisted through several edi-

tions. Huxley tells us that the practical men have been subjected to such a *feu d'enfer* that it is doubtful if any of them survive. One editor tells us that this means "fire from hell"; and two others, including the specialist who "is as much at home in the age he edits as he is in his present day world," tell us that it means "fire of hell." To Huxley it did not; and those who are curious as to what it meant to him may find the answer in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.), II, 689a. Huxley also tells us that all his life he has been "a civil engineer *in partibus infidelium*," and one of these same editors explains this as "in the faction of the unfaithful," which is certainly a perversion of Huxley's meaning. Another editor, evidently puzzled by Thackeray's statement that Beatrix Esmond "had long learned the value of her bright eyes, and tried experiments in coquetry, *in corpore vili*, upon rustics and country squires," finally evolved this howler, "i.e., flagrantly; literally, in wicked body."

Sometimes it seems as though commentators did not read passages carefully before trying to annotate them. In no other way can I understand how one can say that Tennyson's "The red fool-fury of the Seine" is "a complimentary reference to Paris and its revolutions"; or that in

Wond'red Argo which in venturous peece,
First through the Euxene seas bore all the flower
of Greece

by "peece" Spenser meant "ship." I do not see how one who had read beyond the first line of Herbert's poem "The World" could write of his "Love built a stately house," "i.e., the world." Another editor, copying blindly a misprint in the "Everyman" volume, tells us that Swift's "Jack the Bald" is John Calvin "from Latin *caldus*, bald." He goes on to

say that "Knocking Jack of the North" is "John Fox." He probably read very carelessly his source, which said he was John Knox; but a moment's comparison of either of these notes with the passage he was annotating would have showed him that something was wrong with his explanation.

Some authors, of course, need more annotation than others. Browne needs a great deal and seldom gets it—not even for those passages that he (or his first editor) thought needed explanation. Carlyle fares rather better, but there are two important points which I have never found satisfactorily treated in any anthology. The first is at the end of the chapter on "The Everlasting No" in *Sartor Resartus*—the reference to a "Baphometic fire baptism." Some editors ignore the expression completely, most of the others content themselves with the usual dictionary explanation that Baphomet was an idol worshiped by the Templars; and a few add that it is a corrupted form of the name Mahomet. One says that "Carlyle fished the word out of obscure medieval associations"; another names as Carlyle's source "The story of the Fallen Master" but gives no further information as to what this is. One wonders whether he himself did not know or whether he thought that the students would be so familiar with it that more specific identification was unnecessary. Another says that it is "a sudden, flame-like spiritual understanding" and derives it "from Baffometus, an outcast who will receive such a baptism, in the novel of Zacharias Werner, *Die Söhne des Thals*." This sounds very specific but, like the other, contains only a half-truth. Werner's book is not a novel but a "dramatisches Gedicht," as the most cursory examination would have shown. The baptism is not "a sudden flame-like

spiritual understanding" but a punishment administered with molten gold, and it has already been administered. Before it Baffometus was not an outcast but the Master of the Templars, and his tortured form still remains in the crypt beneath their church.

Since no anthology (so far as I am aware) contains a helpful note on this point, the facts may be set down in the hope that some future editor may find them and make some use of them. In the first number of the *Foreign Review* (1828) Carlyle published an article on "The Life and Writings of Werner." To show what claptrap these writings contain, he translated two scenes from the fifth act of *The Templars in Cyprus*, which is the first half of the drama *The Sons of the Valley*. In the second of these scenes one of the characters reads from a book "The Story of the Fallen Master," which tells how Baffometus the Master, for his sin of avarice, was subjected by God to a baptism of molten gold. Quite clearly this is the source from which Carlyle got the expression "Baphometic fire-baptism," although when he used it in *Sartor* he gave it a new meaning.

As to why Carlyle chose Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh as the name of his hero I have not found a satisfactory explanation in any anthology. Some editors ignore the matter completely, and the rest merely parrot the explanation that it means "God-born (or Born of God, or God-begotten) Devil's Dung." It seems never to have occurred to any of these editors⁴ to wonder why Carlyle should have called his character "Devil's Dung," or to think that any student would care to know. Yet reference to any

⁴ With the single exception of the editor of a specialized period anthology intended for advanced students; he says that it "refers to his lower, physical, 'descendental' nature."

good German dictionary would have told them that "Teufelsdreck" (Carlyle's original spelling of the name) is the drug asafetida, and reference to no more recondite a source than the Athenaeum Press edition of *Sartor* would have directed them to Carlyle's letter to his brother John, in which he said: "I sometimes think the book *will* prove a kind of medicinal assafoetida for the pudding stomach of England, and will produce new secretions there." Carlyle is therefore telling us very plainly—whether we understand him or not—that England is bloated with wealth that she has not digested and that his divinely inspired message, although it may prove unpleasant, will perhaps prove salutary for her. Surely, this is a matter of sufficient importance to justify an explanatory note.

Since I have said so much about what I think an anthology should not be, it may be appropriate for me to say what I think it should be. So far as the selection of texts goes, I have little criticism to make of the average anthology. My choice might be somewhat different from that of the editor of any book on the market, but it would not necessarily be better. I would, however, plead for complete works or, where this is impossible, for long selections. Sporadic stanzas picked from a long poem, scattered paragraphs from an essay (which, rightly or wrongly, suggest that the author's choice was motivated by a desire to cut up only one copy of a book instead of two), single speeches from a drama, short passages from a novel, I do not like.

After the editor has selected his texts, he should assume responsibility for their accurate printing. I have found that professional proofreaders are, on the whole, remarkably good; but they cannot be expected to have the familiarity with the

texts that an editor should have. I can see how a printer's reader might pass Shelley's "Adonais" with the lines

Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapped Urania;

but I am sorry to see that any editor had so little literary taste as to do so. Besides reading for the thought, an editor should read the selections, especially the poetry, aloud. Any irregularity in the rhyme or the meter should be looked upon with suspicion and should not be allowed to stand unless it is verified. This method will prove especially useful in the case of the poems of Chaucer, which can so easily be printed incorrectly. The care in proofreading should not, of course, be confined to the text but should extend also to the introductions and notes.

Period introductions and lives of the authors I find useful, but many of them could be abridged and simplified. They should eschew backstairs gossip and scandal and should confine themselves to the essential facts. They should not be used as a vehicle to display the editor's cleverness or his originality. Notes should be numerous—and accurate—and should be directed primarily to explaining passages that the average student might not understand, or might misunderstand, without a note. A note need not be long; in explaining the passage in "Locksley Hall,"

. . . In yonder shining Orient where my
life began to beat;
Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my
father evil-starred,

it was not necessary to say "The hero was born in India, where his father died fighting the Mahrattas." The two words "In India" would be quite sufficient; and, if there were no note at all and the student thought that the Mahrattas lived in Burma, it would not greatly

matter. But in the same poem, although the editor tells us that Cathay is China, he does not tell us what a "cycle of Cathay" is; and we are not told how earth might "stand at gaze," although perhaps it might be guessed at from the reference to the biblical story of "Joshua's moon in Ajalon." Even the teacher may find a good set of notes useful. After one has taught for many years, he has probably accumulated a store of explanations which he transfers from one text to another; but the less experienced teacher, who may know all about the general matters contained in the introductions, will often welcome specific information on specific details of the texts.

As for the other things that publishers lay so much stress upon, I consider them of secondary importance. Sumptuous bindings and marginal sketches do no harm, a readable page is a desideratum, maps are useful—if they are accurate—and so are illustrations if they are well selected and reliable. But to present as "a village scene" of the seventeenth century a picture of a broad street bordered on each side by brick houses three and four stories high is more confusing than helpful; there was probably not a village in England that boasted such a street in

the seventeenth century; and bibliographers have conjectured that the scene represented is Smithfield in London. The cut was originally made by William Faithorne to illustrate the 1676 English edition of Scarron's *Comical Romance of a Company of Stage Players*, "printed for W. Crooke at the green Dragon without Temple Barr." In the anthology it has been trimmed at top and bottom, with some loss to the print, in order to remove the identifying legends.

The preparation of an anthology to be used as a student textbook is not a task to be taken in hand rashly, lightly, and unadvisedly. It is not one which should be urged upon reluctant professors by enterprising booksellers' representatives, who suggest that it can be done in spare winter evenings. Intelligence and a general familiarity with English literature are not enough. It requires also much thought and much hard labor. Unless the prospective anthologist is prepared to devote both of these, in large measure, to the work, he had better leave it alone. He should be told very firmly that there are enough second-rate textbooks in the world and that, unless he is determined to make a first-rate one, he should not undertake to make any at all.

A DEFERRED COURSE IN FRESHMAN ENGLISH

MARJORIE H. THURSTON¹

In the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics at the University of Minnesota the plan of deferring part of the freshman English course until the junior or senior year has been in effect since 1933. When offered to upper-classmen, however, and adapted to their

needs, the course inevitably becomes something different from freshman composition. In technical and professional colleges which do not find it practicable to include a quarter or a semester of advanced writing in curricula already overburdened with required courses, and even in the liberal arts college when acceleration of students is desired, the

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transfer of part of the training in composition to the senior college has certain distinct advantages.

Before describing these, I should like to summarize briefly the circumstances which led to the present sequence of courses in the College of Agriculture, since they involve problems which are not peculiar to our college. Before Exposition 51 was a required course, faculty members in other departments would often complain kindly but pointedly to instructors in the Section of Rhetoric about the poor quality of the English used by many upperclassmen in the essay type of examination and in term papers and reports. Some advisers of graduate students even asserted that they spent more time helping students improve the form and style of their theses than they did working with them on the subject matter itself. Graduating seniors, we were told, did not know how to write letters of application.² Furthermore, the College of Education was at that time requiring some qualifying examinations in English for prospective teachers; and an unduly large number of our students failed them, at least on first trial, despite the fact that they had completed satisfactorily a year of freshman rhetoric.

A course called "Exposition 51" was therefore planned for upperclassmen. Offered at first as an elective, its merits soon became so obvious that it was made a required course for all upperclassmen, with provisions for exemption which will be explained later. Since it was impracticable to add three more hours to the number of hours of English already required, the three hours for Exposition 51 were subtracted from those previously required of freshmen.

² See Phil C. Lange, "Analysis of Letters of Application Written by Prospective Teachers," *Journal of Educational Research*, XXXV (April, 1942), 587-99.

From the point of view of the instructor, an important advantage of this arrangement is that upperclassmen have much more subject matter at their disposal than freshmen ordinarily have, and therefore they write more interesting papers. Besides being better informed on general topics, juniors and seniors are far enough along in agriculture, forestry, and home economics so that they can present many topics pertaining to their particular field of study with a considerable degree of familiarity and competence. Some of them have been employed part time in the various departments and service enterprises found in a college such as ours.³ Thus they can write with firsthand knowledge about the seed-testing laboratory, the keeping of livestock records, experiments with hybrid corn and Thatcher wheat, the University Fruit Farm, quantity cookery in the cafeteria, and experimentation with foods—to mention only a few subjects that students have used. Many of our students work in the summer and thus supplement their formal training by a variety of experiences. I have had students write about forest-fire protection, forest reconnaissance, barberry eradication, grasshopper control, employment as a hospital or camp dietitian, 4-H Club leadership, foods demonstration, and helping to raise a flock of five thousand turkeys for the Thanksgiving Day market. Especially interesting papers are written by older students who have come back to college after two or three years, or sometimes a considerable number, spent in full-time nonacademic employment. For example, when a mature student who has run his own farm for several years writes about the problems of farm management, the preparation of the

³ This was particularly true under the N.Y.A. program.

paper is for him more than a mere academic exercise.

The topics of which I have been speaking are not the kind that freshmen are likely to be in a position to write about. Furthermore, unless our students were required to take a composition course late in their college program, they would not get an opportunity to write about these experiences, and probably would not even realize that they were worth writing about.

A second important advantage of a deferred course is that upperclassmen are more mature in their thinking than freshmen are, and the instructor can thus proceed further than he can in first-year courses into a study of the principles of composition and the techniques of expository writing. Problems in theme construction, methods of developing and clarifying topics, the processes of formal exposition, the adaptation of style to the occasion and the prospective readers—these and other topics are discussed by upperclassmen with a degree of comprehension and interest not achieved by freshmen. Freshmen are likely to consider composition as a continuation of high-school English and to carry over the high-school point of view into their college work. Upperclassmen, however, have not taken a composition course for a year or longer, during which time they will probably have acquired a new point of view and perspective. They can begin to see the practical application of the principles of composition, whereas freshmen are more likely to accept them passively as something remote from their own personal problems in theme writing. The use of a book of selections supplements the theoretical study of exposition and helps make the student more analytical and discriminating in his reading tastes.

The most important advantage of the deferred training in English is that upperclassmen are better motivated than freshmen are. In a college such as ours, senior college students know specifically what they intend to do when they graduate, and they may even know that certain kinds of writing or speaking will be expected of them. For example, a prospective county agent knows that he will have to talk frequently to groups of farmers, that he will have reports to prepare, that his office must do considerable publicity work, and that he will have a large correspondence to look after. A student training to be a teacher of agriculture or a home-economics teacher expects to prepare study programs for, and to address, adult groups, as well as to teach high-school students. A forester knows that, besides submitting numerous reports, he must be a propagandist for conservation. The student looking forward to graduate study will have to write reports and a thesis. Thus students are well aware that the ability to write will be an asset to them professionally and, conversely, that a deficiency in this respect will be a serious handicap. This knowledge is a spur to achievement.

One part of the course is sure to arouse interest in even the most lethargic student, and that is the study of letters of application, which we have found a strategic beginning for the quarter's written assignments. Some students, especially in the spring quarter, work on letters which they expect to use immediately; and I have quite often had a student come into my classroom with a beaming face to tell me that he has just secured a position from a letter which he wrote and revised for a class assignment. In Exposition 51 we impress upon students so sharply the importance of well-written letters of application that many come

back to us after they have completed the course to ask us to criticize letters which they are then sending out. We also stress the importance of writing individual letters and not following a particular model.

A less popular but equally important part of Exposition 51 is the review of the techniques of writing term papers and reports. Although a considerable amount of time is spent in the freshman year studying the use of the library and the writing of research papers, students in our college actually write very few term papers until they are upperclassmen,⁴ by which time the instructions are not freshly in mind. Also, transfer students, of whom we have many, may not have received this training, or may have received it in a college where the library facilities and other opportunities for obtaining research material are not so extensive and complex as they are at the University of Minnesota. By the time they take Exposition 51, most juniors and seniors have written at least one, and usually several, term papers for other courses besides English; and the majority will be confronted by such an assignment during the quarter that they are enrolled in the course. They have become aware, moreover, that faculty members in other departments expect them to prepare their papers in a suitable form and style and that others besides English instructors appreciate a well-turned-out product.⁵ Therefore, students in Exposition 51 have a realistic attitude toward

this assignment which makes the class discussion practical and specific, although unhappily they may lack the enthusiasm and spirit of adventure which characterize freshmen who are writing their first term papers. It is usually possible, if desired, to correlate the writing of a term paper or report in exposition with work in other courses, so as to reduce the amount of time needed for research, in view of the other material to be covered during the quarter.

Finally, from the point of view of the Section of Rhetoric and the College of Agriculture, the deferred course is something of a protection. Most upperclassmen are inclined to slip into careless habits in their written work after the discipline of freshman English is removed, and the course provides a corrective for this tendency. "Until I took this course, I didn't realize how many mistakes I made in my writing," is a common admission. Students are urged to keep their handbooks for future reference, to buy a recent collegiate dictionary if they do not already own one, and to add other reference books in English to their library as they can afford them. More important than the specific subject matter covered is the acquiring of certain attitudes—a desire for self-improvement in English, an awareness of problems in word usage and an interest in them, pride in the quality of their written and spoken English, and the realization that, because they are majoring in agriculture, forestry, and home economics, they are not thereby excused from measuring up to the standards for written and spoken English that are expected of all college-educated people.

⁴ This was ascertained from an item in a questionnaire on English sent out in 1939 to members of the faculty of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics.

⁵ A pamphlet of the instructions given in the Section of Rhetoric for the writing of term papers and reports has been made available at the campus bookstore. Besides describing the literary form and style for term papers it includes a brief treatment of

the form and style of technical and scientific papers. The use of the pamphlet has made possible greater uniformity in requirements throughout the different divisions of the college.

Since Exposition 51 is required for graduation, it is possible, in extreme cases, actually to deny a diploma to anyone whose use of English falls conspicuously below a reasonable standard and shows no prospect of improvement.

The course is especially useful in handling transfer students. Before it was required, transfer students who used very poor English could go out as graduates of our college without our having had the opportunity to instruct them in any of their English courses. Under the present arrangement, a transfer student must take Exposition 51 unless he can qualify for exemption.

But the main purpose of Exposition 51, it should be stressed, is not expiation for deficiencies in English. As a matter of fact, a considerable number of students who could be exempted take the course from choice, and the percentage of students who try for exemption by examination has decreased since the course was first offered. The real purpose, as I believe has already been made sufficiently clear, is to provide students with an opportunity to improve their mastery of English at a time when, psychologically, they will respond favorably to it and will profit greatly by it.

The present provisions for exemption from Exposition 51 provide something of an incentive for good work in English, as well as make it possible for able students who really do not have time for the course to remove the requirement. These provisions can be explained by outlining the sequence of composition courses on our campus. Entering freshmen are assigned to Rhetoric I or Rhetoric II on the basis of their high-school rating and

an English placement test. Those assigned to Rhetoric II, who are the better-prepared students, proceed at a somewhat accelerated pace through two quarters of composition during their freshman year (that is, Rhetoric II and Rhetoric III). The students in Rhetoric I are given a thoroughgoing review of fundamentals, as well as an introduction to theme writing. These students then take Rhetoric II and Rhetoric III in sequence.⁶ Any freshman who receives two A's or a B and an A in Rhetoric II and Rhetoric III is thereby exempted from Exposition 51. Other students, including transfers, may try for exemption by taking an examination which is offered every quarter. The standards for the examination are sufficiently high so that only students who are above average in the quality of their work and have done some preliminary reviewing are likely to get through it. About a fourth of the students in the college are exempted from taking the course.

The precise program which we have worked out in the College of Agriculture is, of course, unimportant. But we believe that the plan of providing further training in composition for upperclassmen, especially those who are weak in English, is important. When advanced composition cannot be added to the present curriculum, a deferred course in freshman English is a possible and practicable alternative.

⁶ Students who are placed in Rhetoric I are thus required to take three quarters of English in their freshman year. However, Rhetoric I includes sub-freshman work, and therefore these students take but two freshman courses that are strictly on a college level.

READING AND COMPOSITION AS RELATED PROBLEMS OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH

CHARLOTTE E. CRAWFORD¹

It is a generally accepted fact that a large percentage of American college students are not able to read efficiently the materials upon which a large part of college instruction is based. As an estimate of the incidence of reading disabilities among college students, 30 per cent, one figure reported by Ruth Strang in *Problems in the Improvement of Reading in High School and College* seems conservative. Partial surveys which have been made² show no uniformity in the reading programs devised to meet the resultant problem. Some colleges have set up remedial reading classes to provide individual or group instruction. Some orientation courses include remedial or developmental reading or both. Instruction in remedial or developmental reading or both has been made part of some freshman English courses. All reading programs have been experimental; as Professor Charters pointed out, most problems originate in a college because someone in some department feels that something should be done about the problem of reading deficiency and is willing to take over the responsibility for it. With increasing frequency it is the teacher of freshman English who takes the responsibility, possibly because the required

freshman course in composition is established in the curriculum³ and because ability to read easily is fundamental to more advanced courses in the department of English.

The teacher of freshman English cannot cover the entire problem of reading deficiencies. Psychologists have shown reading to be very complicated in itself and closely tied up with the nature, background, and development of the individual student. Reading has been analyzed into such factors as intelligence, physical process, individual attitudes and interests, and comprehension. Two of these factors are not fundamental concerns in the college reading program. Intelligence is not a factor which can be changed, although it is recognized as a fundamental factor in reading ability and it has been established that the cases which respond to reading instruction are those in which reading ability as measured by group testing appears to lag behind intelligence so measured. Individual attitudes and interests are not the factor which a program devised in response to concern about the large number of poor readers in college would fundamentally attack. A third factor—mechanics of reading—would have to be handled by a specialist trained in educational psychology, and this is usually the concern of the purely remedial reading course. The factor in

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² Ruth Strang, "The Improvement of Reading in College," *English Journal*, XXVI (1937), 548-59; W. W. Charters, "Remedial Reading in College," *Journal of Higher Education*, XII (1941), 117-21; Robert L. McCaul, "The Cost of Remedial Reading Programs in 18 Colleges," *School and Society*, LVI (1942), 361-64.

³ See the summary of the first report of the committee of inquiry into required English courses in American colleges in *College English*, III (1942), 584-86.

reading ability which has not received very specialized attention from the educational psychologists in their programs, which appears to be a logical concern of an English teacher, and which is a fundamental reading difficulty is comprehension.

Comprehension is the essentially linguistic factor in reading. It is the ability to understand, through the language symbols of the printed page, the related ideas set forth by the author. A program of instruction in reading comprehension is, presumably, developmental in purpose. To undertake such a program is to recognize that college reading demands more ability than does reading at lower educational levels. Comprehension, distinguished from other factors in the reading process, can be developed; and its development can be justified as a concern of the teacher of freshman English.

Successful integration of developmental instruction in reading comprehension with the teaching of composition would require an approach toward comprehension consistent with that already taken toward composition. Psychologists approach reading from the point of view of the specific skills and abilities which make an effective reader. To test measurable skills and abilities, they have devised objective tests as a technique of appraisal. Several widely used textbooks attempt to apply this technique to reading comprehension as well. Reading comprehension either has not yet been analyzed thoroughly enough for such methods to be valid or does not represent the kind of abilities which can be so measured; and the same kind of criticism can be leveled at these textbooks as has been made of the composition workbook. There is often little connection between a student's ability to check off satisfactory responses to multiple-choice items,

which are often phrased in the language of the selection upon which they are based, and his ability to assimilate into his own thinking material he has read. Objective data, although widely used, do not provide the teacher with a practical basis on which to proceed with a developmental program for improving reading comprehension at the college level.

A practical basis for this type of program can be found if reading comprehension is analyzed not from the point of view of the abilities possessed by the reader but from the point of view of the demands made upon the reader by the material itself. Reading comprehension, considered as distinct from intelligence, the reading process, and personal attitudes and interests, can be analyzed from the point of view of the demands made upon the reader by the very nature of exposition. Comprehension of exposition would appear to demand of the reader ability to understand the words and phrases used by an author, ability to recognize the structure of sentences, and ability to discern the form of the whole selection. The nature of exposition is already a concern of the composition course. The close relation between the reading and the writing of exposition can be established in the jargon of educational psychology by observing that skills in the language arts have been found to be closely correlated or in the jargon of aesthetics by borrowing Hebbel's dictum that "whoever absorbs a work of art into himself goes through the same process as the artist who produced it—only he reverses the process and increases its speed."

Enlarging a student's vocabulary to meet the needs of college reading is probably a more specialized matter than reading instruction has so far made it. So far as general vocabulary goes, there is no

way of diagnosing a student's deficiencies accurately. The best vocabulary tests are either only samplings or tests of the ability to use contextual clues to meaning. The teaching of words is a task without beginning, end, or means of evaluation. It is possible, however, to encourage a student to enlarge his own vocabulary by giving him such fundamental training in the use of the dictionary as is already part of composition courses. Moreover, practical training in relating word meanings to context and in recognizing shifts in meaning from context to context is helpful. Such training can give the student an interest in and a technique for analyzing and improving his own limitations in general vocabulary.

It is likely that there is a greater need than is yet realized for specialized vocabulary-building in courses in content fields in the college curriculum. It has been established by experimental studies that direct methods of teaching vocabulary are more effective than indirect methods and that there is a close connection between a student's experience and interests and the words that he retains in his vocabulary. Also, the beginnings have been laid for study of vocabulary needs within the content fields. These observations seem to justify teaching vocabulary wherever possible in the context with which the words will be associated. A group of freshmen who did not recognize "division of labor," even as being a technical term, needed, not a cursory definition, but a thorough grounding in the economic principles behind the concept represented by the term. The science department had to assume responsibility for the vocabulary problem encountered in the laboratory when a student described an organ as lying "anterior to the anterior-posterior axis." A

group of freshmen could not interpret the following passage:

Just as life is a continuous unfolding of new experiences which grow out of past experiences, so too laws have their debt to pay to the heritage of the past and are a reflection of the conditions out of which they have grown.

It was found that only one reader in the group was interpreting the word "laws" other than as "lawmakers." The group needed, not a formal definition, but training in history to build up a background for understanding what "law" means. Words which represent abstract concepts always offer greatest difficulty in vocabulary, but there is a distinction to be made between general and technical vocabulary, as the difficulty is effectively met. The teaching of technical vocabulary lies outside the field of the teacher of freshman English.

An aspect of reading comprehension which can be developed through the material and approach of the freshman English course is the reading of the sentence. One psychologist found a low correlation between ability to use contextual clues to establish word meanings and scores on a vocabulary test; and he interpreted it in terms of deficiency in working knowledge of sentence and paragraph structure. Observation of students in freshman classes shows weak grammar to be an obstacle to reading comprehension. A freshman group had difficulty with the following sentence:

In the process of study the understanding of new material often depends upon recalling concepts, principles, processes or other forms of information that have been studied previously.

Discussion revealed that students were variously reading "understanding" as an object of "study," taking "in the process of study" as the subject of the sentence, overlooking the word "recalling," and failing to relate the final clause to the

series of nouns. There has been a good deal of carping about the need for teaching grammar so that it becomes a practical tool in speaking and writing; one suspects that reading needs to be added to composition as an objective of the teaching of grammar.

Along with the understanding of the words and phrases used and the recognition of relationships among words in the sentence, a third factor in reading comprehension is the ability to grasp the author's essential meaning and to discriminate among major and lesser ideas which serve to build up the meaning. Educational psychologists speak of "recognition of logical relationships" and "assimilation"; composition textbooks deal with "outlining" and "statement of controlling purpose"; critics write of "structure" and "unity"; philosophers speak of "form." All are referring to one principle—that exposition is effective if it achieves its purpose by an orderly pattern of logical development. This principle is important for the writer if he is to express his ideas effectively; it is important to the reader if he is to comprehend completely. Techniques already taught in composition classes are effective aids in the comprehension of exposition. The student is trained to look for topic sentences, to phrase a summary, to write a précis, and to outline. Such techniques have proved useful in developing comprehension to the level required by the various types of reading in advanced courses in college.

Integration of instruction in reading comprehension into the freshman English course can be a fundamental step toward a developmental reading program at the college level. To be adequate, a developmental program would also have to provide for teaching of tech-

nical vocabulary in the fields of the social, physical, and biological sciences, as well as in languages and fine arts. The teaching of technical vocabulary can be implemented into the curriculum easily if teachers in the various fields are concerned about the reading problem. In a curriculum organized into departments this teaching can be dispersed throughout courses or made part of one fundamental course. In the curriculum organized into divisions, the teaching of vocabulary can be introduced into the lower division survey courses. The orientation course, where it already exists, offers a convenient pattern.

An adequate all-college reading program would probably have to include, apart from its developmental features, some remedial work on a subfreshman level to handle deficiencies due to factors other than poor comprehension. Remedial courses usually deal, through clinical procedures or group instruction or both, with deficiencies in the mechanical process of reading as revealed by objective tests. Remedial reading should be handled by specialists trained in educational psychology. It has no place in the freshman English course, important as it is in a total college reading program.

The teacher of freshman English has materials and an approach upon which to base an effective developmental program in reading comprehension for the otherwise competent college freshman. Through methods already used in the composition course he can improve reading by attention to general vocabulary problems, grammar, and practice in organization. A recent discussion considered reading as a problem of freshman composition;⁴ one can take the matter

⁴ George S. Wykoff, "Reading as a Problem in Composition," *College English*, IV (1943), 245-54.

much further than that and insist that to integrate reading comprehension with composition as a concern of the required

course in freshman English is to take a fundamental step toward meeting the reading problem at the college level.

THE FUTURE TENSE IN ENGLISH

FUTURE AND MODAL AUXILIARIES: "SHALL" AND "WILL," "TO BE GOING"

JOHN WHYTE¹

The controversy over the use of *shall* and *will* continues to rage in spite of all that grammarians and textbook-makers can do about it. For centuries grammarians have set down a few simple(?) rules to govern the use of these auxiliaries, quite oblivious of their actual use in literature or in cultivated colloquial English, as Fries, Luebke, and others have demonstrated. Whether a Germanist who has approached this problem from another angle can clarify some of the major issues involved would appear extremely doubtful, but possibly something may be gained from the considerations of one who has approached the problem without some of the preconceptions that members of the English guild may be suspected of having.

My present preoccupation with the future tense in English came about quite unintentionally. I was merely interested in gathering material for a book for German Americans,² in which I wanted to stress cultivated, colloquial American English. I needed, therefore, to determine what the colloquial translations are

for the simple German sentences *Spielen Sie morgen?* or *Werden Sie morgen spielen?* which are equivalent in meaning in German, the only significant difference being that *Spielen Sie morgen?* (the present tense in future meaning) is more frequently used than *Werden Sie morgen spielen?* (with the future auxiliary *werden*). Before I knew it, I was confronted with a large number of English possibilities for the expression of future action indicated by these two German sentences. I shall list these possibilities in questions and also in declarative sentences.

Spielen Sie morgen? Werden Sie morgen spielen?

- Shall you play tomorrow?
- Will you play tomorrow?
- Do you play tomorrow?
- Shall you be playing tomorrow?
- Will you be playing tomorrow?
- Are you going to play tomorrow?
- Are you going to be playing tomorrow?
- Are you playing tomorrow?
- Shall you be playing tomorrow?
- Will you be playing tomorrow?

Ich spiele morgen. Ich werde morgen spielen.

- I shall play tomorrow.
- I will play tomorrow.
- I play tomorrow.
- I shall be playing tomorrow.
- I will be playing tomorrow.
- I am going to play tomorrow.
- I am going to be playing tomorrow.

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² This book, *American Words and Ways Especially for German Americans* (New York: Viking Press, 1943), deals (1) with cultivated colloquial American English, (2) with differences in American and German social forms, and (3) with differences in the national characteristics of Germans and Americans.

I am playing tomorrow.
I shall be playing tomorrow.
I will be playing tomorrow.

With such a wealth of possibilities to choose from, how should the German translate his simple future statements or questions? It should be apparent immediately that he cannot use all these ten possibilities indiscriminately and that the English future carries implications and subtle nuances that are not contained in his pure-future German sentences. In order to determine what his choice should be, I consulted a large number of colleagues in both the English and other fields and also a large number of college students, checked their usage against current writing, and then resorted to current English handbooks and grammars, finally topping off with the material that I found in the scholarly grammars and articles of Curme, Fries, Luebke, Jespersen, and others. What I have to say is a synthesis of all that I have read and observed, with, I believe, a somewhat different emphasis than can elsewhere be found.

At the outset it must be said that the average English handbook was almost useless for my purpose of determining the current colloquial use of the English future. The average textbook-maker repeats the stereotyped rules for *shall* and *will* with, at the most, a slight reservation to the effect that "informal usage is dropping the distinctions between *shall* and *will*" and then adds, as if to salve his conscience for making such an admission, "Careful usage still observes the following rules"—rules which are then listed as they have been listed since time immemorial (regardless of Fries, Luebke, and others). At the most, then, these handbooks treat only the questions

Shall you play tomorrow? and *Will you play tomorrow?* and the sentences *I shall play tomorrow* and *I will play tomorrow* and say nothing about the future possibilities in such sentences as *I am going to play tomorrow* and *I am playing tomorrow*, *Are you going to play tomorrow?* and *Are you playing tomorrow?*

"I SHALL PLAY TOMORROW" AND "I WILL PLAY TOMORROW"

The traditional distinctions given in these handbooks are stated most dogmatically, not to say offensively, by H. W. Fowler in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, when he aligns himself with Bradley in stating that the use of *will* for pure futurity in the first person is a "mark of Scottish, Irish, provincial or extra-British idiom," and refers, by implication, to Fries and others who have dared to point out the inadequacy of the rules as "people who are not to the manner born." All one can say in reply is: How Fowler and Bradley must blush when they find purely English writers, from Shakespeare and Ben Jonson down to the present day, violating these sacred rules; and how must that master of the English tongue, Winston Churchill, grate on their British ears when he speaks in "an extra-British idiom" and betrays the fact that "he is not to the manner born." For surely the following examples from the solemn war speeches of Churchill are not justified under the rigid rules of Fowler and the vast majority of English grammarians, even though a few subtler grammarians find it possible to explain them within more elaborate rules.

We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight

in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight on the hills; we shall never surrender. . . .³

We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools and we will finish the job.⁴

Surely this use of *shall* expresses determination and not pure futurity and is not covered by the conventional rules. It may well be that, since *will* is so frequently used in the first person for pure futurity, it is losing its force for determination and that *shall*, which is less and less used for pure futurity, may sound more emphatic, when stressed, than *will*. Moreover, *shall* lends itself phonetically to more emphatic utterance than the weaker consonant and vowel combination in *will*. But however that may be, there can be little doubt that Churchill's determination is at least as strongly expressed as that of the American soldier whose words shortly before his death are quoted in Ambassador Grew's *Report from Tokyo*: "I will work; I will save; I will sacrifice; I will endure; I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the whole struggle depended on me alone."

The conclusion appears inescapable that both *shall* and *will* can express determination in the first person, when emphasized, even though only *will* has a grammar tradition behind it for this purpose.

"SHALL YOU PLAY TOMORROW?"

The traditional grammar rule for the use of questions demands the use of the form of *shall* or *will* which is anticipated in the answers. (One grammar adds the

³ From Churchill's speech before the House of Commons, June 4, 1940, on the evacuation of Dunkirk.

⁴ From his broadcast on February 9, 1941.

following injunction to the above rule: "The questioner, it is seen, must think quickly of the answer before asking the question.") The normal question in the future should, therefore, be *Shall you play tomorrow?*

But is *Shall you play tomorrow?* an acceptable translation of *Spielen Sie morgen?* In the answers to a questionnaire which I sent out to 139 colleagues and students in Brooklyn College, New York University, Lafayette College, and the University of Wisconsin only 2 per cent admitted ever using it. Fries,⁵ in his study of *shall* and *will* in English and American dramas from 1557 to 1915, found only seven instances of its use, with not a single example in the dramas from 1860 to 1915. Luebke⁶ found only one instance in ten novels of the nineteen-twenties. It is, therefore, quite impossible as either literary or colloquial English. With such overwhelming evidence against its use, one can only shake one's head in wonder at the stubborn insistence of those grammarians—and they are still in the majority—who insist on restating in their grammars the *Shall you* question, which never was, is not now, and presumably never will be good English usage. (See definition of grammar: "Grammar is the study or science of the usages of language.")

"WILL YOU PLAY TOMORROW?"

If the *Shall you* question is out of consideration, since it is a violation of good usage, what of the *Will you* question as a pure future question and a translation of

⁵ Charles Carpenter Fries, "The Periphrastic Future with *Shall* and *Will* in Modern English," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, XL (1925), 963-1024.

⁶ W. F. Luebke, "The Analytic Future in Contemporary American Fiction," *Modern Philology*, XXVI (1929), 451 ff.

the German *Spielen Sie morgen?* The statistical evidence on this point is less clear than on *Shall you*. Fries, in the study cited, makes no differentiation between *shall* and *will* as modal auxiliaries and as future auxiliaries. But those that answered my questionnaire on the acceptability of *Will you play tomorrow?* all felt the modal quality of the *Will you*; in other words, they understood the *Will you* question to be an invitation to play, *with me* being understood. Thus this question is not an answer to *Spielen Sie morgen?* but rather of *Wollen Sie morgen spielen?* or *Do you want to play with me tomorrow?*

**"ARE YOU GOING TO PLAY
TOMORROW?"**

With *Shall you* out of the question because of its hopelessly schoolmarm quality and *Will you* eliminated because of its modal significance, what is the pure future translation of *Spielen Sie morgen?* One looks in vain in the average school or college grammar for a pure future question that corresponds exactly to the pure colorless future of *Spielen Sie morgen?* But surely the English language is not so poverty-stricken that it hasn't a colorless future question in the second person! The colleagues and students that answered my questionnaire gave the correct answer when they chose the question *Are you going to play tomorrow?* It was the first choice of the large majority of both teachers and students, with the students making it their almost unanimous choice.

**"TO BE GOING" AND THE SCHOL-
ARLY GRAMMARS**

Although one looks in vain for the periphrastic future with *to be going* in the average college grammar, it is treated in

the more scholarly grammars. It gets a paragraph or two in Curme's *Syntax*, Curme's *College Grammar*, Jespersen's *Modern English Grammar*, and Deutschbein's *Grammatik der englischen Sprache*. But its treatment in these grammars strikes me as either inadequate or misleading. Curme, for example, admits it as a pure future form but also states that its pure future meaning is often considered secondary to the idea of "immediateness" or "earnest purpose." To illustrate these uses, Curme quotes the sentences *I am going to call on him soon* (immediateness) and *I am going to put my foot down on that* (earnest purpose). To be sure, immediateness and earnest purpose are expressed in these sentences, but quite as much by the other words in the context as by *am going*. The colorless German future can also take on immediateness in the sentence *Ich werde ihn bald besuchen*, and earnest purpose in *Ich werde das verbieten*.

Royster and Steadman⁷ made a study of the *going to* future and came to conclusions not unlike those of Curme. They find that only upon very infrequent occasions is *going to* used as a pure future. For the most part, they find immediacy or determination expressed by it, and they conclude their study by saying: "In the common language of America today, *I will* and *I'll* are pure future forms and *I'm going to* the modal form." In support of their conclusions they cite figures for its use in *Barry Lyndon*, *Old Curiosity Shop*, and *The Leavenworth Case*, under five categories. Their figures show 34 examples of general intention, 6 of earnest purpose, 8 of certainty of future, 9 of immediacy, and none of the colorless future. One may be permitted to wonder

⁷ J. F. Royster and J. M. Steadman, Jr., in the *Manly Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature* (1923).

whether other interpreters of the examples might not have found some colorless futures in the category of general intention.

It is, of course, true that the *going to* future originally expressed determination, earnest purpose, or immediacy and still often does so today; but surely every observer of its widespread and growing use must often find it indispensable as a pure future auxiliary. In the second person question form it takes on that function in the example given above, as well as in other examples.

There is no immediacy or earnest purpose involved in the question *Where are you going to spend your next sabbatical?* That question is equally correct for a sabbatical beginning next month, next year, or six years from now. And the answer to it, *I am going to spend my next sabbatical in Europe*, can be more easily interpreted as pure futurity than as earnest purpose, determination, or what not.

Just as *Are you going to play?* is the indispensable question in the second person for pure futurity, so *Are we going to play tomorrow?* is the only unambiguous and currently used pure future question in the first person. *Shall we play tomorrow?* has, of course, a modal quality

(equivalent to the German *Sollen wir morgen spielen?*) while *Will we play tomorrow?* is, as Fries has pointed out, rarely used.

If these considerations are correct, *to be going* should not be treated as a step-child but frankly admitted as a pure future possibility—certainly at least in those cases where *shall* or *will* are not used or are not acceptable because of the modal quality that so frequently attaches to them. Its service for this purpose has already received some recognition. McKnight, Haber, and Hatfield, in their *Grammar of Living English*, speak of “the *to be going* combination as a convenience, since it makes unnecessary a difficult choice between *shall* and *will*.” But the matter will probably take care of itself. Just as grammars have been powerless to impose on their students their stereotyped rules for *shall* and *will*, so no amount of attention grammars devote to *to be going* may have much effect on the use of *to be going*. One fact is being increasingly noted, and that is that *to be going* is rapidly gaining in popularity among all users of English; and the presumption is therefore reasonable that it will continue so to grow, thus giving us a real pure future auxiliary alongside the troublesome *shall* and *will*.

ROUND TABLE

HERR HITLER AND SOPH LIT

As the representative of the Army concluded his excellent short speech amid a burst of applause, my friend the Coach whispered, "Aw, as usual, the English department got all the breaks." To the perennial slander imbedded in this generalization, I retorted nastily, "Board, room, and laundry!" but at that I was inclined to think the Colonel had treated us pretty well. He had said something about the composition courses required as part of the armed forces' training programs, had suggested that the blunder sacrificing the Light Brigade at Balaklava was a pronoun with indefinite reference, and had commented feelingly on six million dollars' worth of misplaced comma in a government revenue act. In short, he had done us proud.

But mention of the spiritual qualities in the *Faerie Queene* and exposition of the beautiful imagery of *Kubla Khan* were as notably if understandably lacking as praise of the poetic subtlety of Cynewulf. And the teachers of bellicosely essential subjects thereafter condoled with me somewhat eagerly on the inevitable elimination of such impractical courses as literature, along with, presumably, me. The atmosphere suggested that, although war was, of course, a terrible calamity, a little good might possibly result if certain too-long-delayed curricular and personnel adjustments should at last be made. I returned to my desk with something of the feeling a turkey must have on Armistice Day: not yet actually worried but a bit depressed.

Then I began to mark papers from the sophomore course in English literature; and after I had twice pushed up the minimum for a B grade, I resorted to Hibernian mathematics and placed 30 per cent of the class in the upper 25 per cent. Anyone who thinks he can adjust that outfit to the so-called

curve of normal distribution has my permission to try!

But my point is not, of course, to criticize grading systems based on hypothetical conditions or to rebuke instructors who paint the picture to match the frame. My point is that I have a good class. Those children, and 4F's, and student-preachers, and women are studying literature. It is not that their entrance tests show them to be intellectual giants. Actually, I believe there are fewer of outstanding ability than usual. But they are studying literature. Even the poorest of them are studying literature.

Several factors probably aid in producing this desirable result. In the first place, the definitely inferior students have in many cases decided sensibly and patriotically that their contribution to the national effort will be greater in war work, which they can do, than in college work, which they cannot do. Then the playboys and red-hot mamas are loafing on some emergency job at \$1.72 an hour (time and a half for sleeping after the whistle has blown). The reduction in extra-curricular activity on the campus probably allows more time for books. And possibly I have been lucky in the students who have registered for the course.

My impression is, however, that the students remaining on the campus have a strong sense of responsibility. If they are not in war work, they must in justice to their fellow-students at the front make the most of their opportunities. If they are not in war work, they are losing money at such a rate that their education is costing them far more than tuition. If they are not in war work, then their only justification for existing is to try to fit themselves to meet the shortage in the professionally trained which the war will cause.

And they want to know. Where the college generation of twenty-five years ago

were content with a formula alibi in which blame for their religious skepticism (lack of business success, rheumatism, poor luck at poker, liking for jazz, inability to appreciate Cézanne) was laid upon the war which a dunderheaded older generation permitted the munitions-makers to bring upon the world, the present group refuse to accept such a simplification even to the extent of throwing up to Papa that he must now be that dunderheaded older generation—without alibi for once! They want to know.

Hence they are willing to concentrate on literary studies. Maybe the answer is there. Or why did Lord Gray of Fallooden read Wordsworth? Why are such diverse personalities as Rousseau and Voltaire associated with the French Revolution? Or why did Herr Hitler begin his career by writing a book himself and burning those of other men? In this attitude I can see more hope for the study of literature—and perhaps for American education in general—than in the eighty or a hundred books and articles on the post-war college listed in the bibliography which lies on my desk as I write. Possibly my friend the Coach was not so far wrong.

H. F. WATSON

SIMPSON COLLEGE

VERBAL AMBIGUITIES IN MARLOWE'S DR. FAUSTUS

I. TAMBURLAINE AND FAUSTUS ON BEAUTY

*Hellen, whose beauty summond Greece to
armes,
And drew a thousand ships to Tenedos,
Had not bene nam'd in Homers Illiads:*

[*Tamburlaine*, II, II, iii, 3055-57]

When Marlowe's Tamburlaine thus praised his "faire Zenocrate," he left little doubt in the reader's mind concerning Zenocrate's beauty. But the warrior's competency as a judge of beauty is questionable. Nothing in his phenomenal rise from shepherd to conqueror suggests his proficiency as a beauty expert. It is not improbable that Tamburlaine, burdened with the knowledge

of death's approach to his loved one, exaggerated in eulogizing her so dear to him. At any rate, the Scythian did not know the immortality of Helen's kiss or the beauty of her face.

Whatever else he was, Dr. Faustus was an intelligent man of vast experiences. His far-reaching travels and keen observation must have afforded him a reasonably accurate conception of beauty. Then, too, his experiences were not confined to the world of the living. On more than one occasion he saw characters of past ages. Thus, were a choice to be made between the beauty of Zenocrate and that of Helen, the decision would be given to her chosen from the world's fairest by him who had enjoyed the opportunity of viewing them all.

In none of Tamburlaine's speeches which glorify Zenocrate does the reader find such exquisite beauty as that in the twenty-line speech of Faustus. Although the playwright's first hero is extravagant in his use of figurative language, the latter character outdoes Tamburlaine's best efforts by twenty lines. Considering these verses in his edition of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Boas believes that Marlowe has captured "the transcendent rapture of the invocation in which deathless passion yearns toward deathless beauty and there finds its consummation."¹ In expressing such rapture, the dramatist takes petal after petal, rose after rose, to form his perfectly scented bouquet. Yet, it is significant that fewer figures of speech are used in *Dr. Faustus* and—possibly because of the sensual and emotional development of Faustus over Tamburlaine, coupled with the process of the dramatist's own maturation—that the later hero's diction is of a finer quality than the passionate outbursts of the blood-glutted tyrant.

II. ANALYSIS OF FAUSTUS' SPEECH TO HELEN

Was this the face that lancht a thousand shippes
And burnt the toplesse Towres of Illium?

¹ F. S. Boas, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (New York: Dial Press, 1932).

Sweete *Helen*, make me immortall with a kisse:
Her lips suckes forth my soule, see where it
flies:

Come *Helen*, come give mee my soule againe.
Here wil I dwel, for heaven be in these lips,
And all is drosse that is not *Helena*:
I wil be *Paris*, and for love of thee,
Insteede of *Troy*, shal *Wertenberge* be sackt,
And I wil combate with weake *Menelaus*,
And weare they colours on my plumed Crest:
Yea I wil wound *Achillis* in the heele,
And then returne to *Helen* for a kisse.
O thou art fairer then the evening aire,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres,
Brighter art thou then flaming *Jupiter*,
When he appeard to haplesse *Seneca*,
More lovely then the monarke of the skie
In wanton *Arethusaes* azurde armes,
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.

[*Dr. Faustus*, ll. 1328-47]

The first words which Faustus speaks as he indulges himself in Helen's beauty begin a series of ambiguities, all of which group themselves to form one complete figure: "transcendent rapture." The metonymy extends through the second line:

.... the face that lancht a thousand shippes
And burnt the toplesse Towres of Illium.

"Immortal" in the third line may have three meanings: (1) the kiss of one returning from ages past might make its recipient immortal also in an infinite way; (2) the kiss of one the possessor of such heavenly beauty as to summon "Greece to arms" might make him who is kissed heavenly in a transcendent manner; and (3) the kiss might rather blindly enable Faustus to escape his dire end. The word "kiss" is also noteworthy in that it suggests other than sensual emotions. One thinks of spiritual benefits such as the cleansing derived from Christ's touch or from kissing his garments.

The fourth line (1331) offers the third and fourth figures: "Her lips suckes forth my soule, see where it flies," while at the same time it further develops the idea of immortality.

The fifth line, a conceit within its own right, reflects the thought of the preceding verse: ".... give mee my soule againe."

In the sixth line, "Here wil I dwel, for

heaven be in these lips," the implication is, first, that he (Faustus) will remain in heaven, wheresoever; second, that the lips are heavenly in that they arrest the soul.

"And all is drosse that is not *Helena*" affords the distinct pun of the passage: *Helena*. Mephistophilis has already informed Faustus that, when the end of the world comes, "All places shall be hell that is not heaven."² Thus, heaven is found in Helen's lips; all else is waste.

The next six lines (1335-40) express a slightly different view; yet they are unmistakably of the whole. The keynote of these lines is "I wil be *Paris*." Marlowe then includes episodes from the *Troy* legend, exchanging *Wertenberge* for *Troy*. In returning "to *Helen* for a kisse," Faustus refers to the sixth and seventh lines of the passage.

Line 1341 affords: "... fairer then the evening aire," and line 1342 continues with "Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres." The commas at the ends of this and line 1344 are misleading; for, although the figures are closely related, "Brighter art thou then flaming *Jupiter*" and "More lovely then the monarke of the skie" are tropes themselves.

Another reading of these twenty verses reveals more than a series of ambiguities. To the delight of his audiences Marlowe portrays beauty in its universal perfection.

HOBART S. JARRETT
LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

EUGENE O'NEILL'S PLAYS PRINTED ABROAD

In the history of the American drama there has been no writer who has established a wider foreign reputation than Eugene O'Neill. His plays have been produced in almost every important city of the world and have made a deep impression upon theater audiences, critics, and even

² C. F. Tucker Brooke (ed.), *The Works of Christopher Marlowe: The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), l. 558.

publishers. In England, Germany, and Sweden, editions and translations appeared in print only a short while after the plays had reached the stage. The first British edition of a series of three of O'Neill's plays (*Plays: First Series: The Straw, Emperor Jones, and Diff'rent*) was issued in May, 1922, to be followed, during the next year, by three volumes containing thirteen plays. One of these volumes—*The Hairy Ape and Other Plays*—has been reprinted six times since. The Germans published a translation of *The Emperor Jones* (*Kaiser Jones*) as early as 1923, almost coincident with the first production of the same play in Berlin, and would have printed *Anna Christie* even earlier if its translator, the Hungarian Melchior Lengyel, had received the author's permission. There is no record of a German edition of this play. The first Swedish attempt to publish the American's works was made in 1924, when a collection under the title of *Tre Dramer: Emperor Jones—Ludna gorillan—Tran* was published by Albert Bonnier in Stockholm. In all these cases, the response of the reading public must have been satisfactory, for this publishing house, as well as Jonathan Cape in London and S. Fischer in Berlin, has continued to print other dramas by O'Neill.

In France, O'Neill is better known as a literary figure than as a playwright. This is reflected in the fact that the first three translations of his plays *Ile*, *The Moon of the Caribees*, and *The Hairy Ape* appeared in French literary magazines (between 1928 and 1930). So far I have found only one Italian edition—*Anna Christie* translated by Luigi Berti and printed in 1938. Spanish editions have been sold not only in Spain but also in South American countries, for the publishers held the rights for both markets.

The play that has been printed most frequently—to judge from the foreign editions I have been able to locate—is *Strange Interlude*. The first British edition appeared in 1928, and there were four reprints between 1929 and 1936. In 1933,

the German "Albatross Modern Continental Library" brought out an English edition, and *Excelsior*, a Chilean literary magazine, published "Extraño Interludio" in a 1937 issue. The play has also been translated into French and Rumanian. Perhaps in the opinion of one of the French critics, who said that *Strange Interlude* is more like a novel than a play, we have the explanation of why publishers in various parts of the world have felt that this play would appeal to the reading public.

The list of foreign editions of O'Neill's plays extends over seventeen years, from 1922 to 1939—an impressive record when we consider that the American playwright wrote most of his plays in the twenties.

HORST FRENZ

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

WHERE IS UTOPIA COLLEGE?

To the Editor of "College English"

DEAR SIR:

Several of my colleagues fear that outsiders will think my own institution is described under the name of "Utopia College."¹ I should like to deny this, not so much in concern for Beloit's reputation—which can take care of itself—but for fear other institutions may say, "Such conditions do not exist here." The point of my article is that such conditions exist everywhere. Utopia College (the word itself means "nowhere," of course) represents any and every American college and university. The evils I describe, and the remedies I suggest, are based upon my experience with various institutions, and knowledge of others, in twenty years of undergraduate work, graduate work, and teaching.

Sincerely,

ARTHUR M. COON

BELUIT COLLEGE

¹ "The Freshman English Situation at Utopia College," *College English*, February, 1944, pp. 282-84.

CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

PORTER G. PERRIN, ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT, J. B. MCMILLAN, JULIUS C. BERNSTEIN

What do grammarians mean by "sentence modifiers"?

H. M. S.

The phrase usually refers to adverbs and adverbial clauses that do not modify specifically a "verb, adjective, or other adverb." Sweet (*New English Grammar*, p. 127) used "sentence adverb" to mean adverbs that stand as sentences, like *yes*, *no*, *certainly*, in answer to questions, and used "sentence-modifying adverbs" for what most now call "sentence adverbs" (e.g., Curme, *Syntax*, pp. 130 ff.). The latter term is equated with "conjunctive adverb" in *Webster's Dictionary*, but that does not seem to be general usage.

Many adverbs explicitly modify particular words: "He ran *fast*"; "*nearly* dark." But many, and sometimes it seems most, adverbs modify the meaning of the statement as a whole: "He *probably* didn't know"; "She was *always* well dressed"; "*Unfortunately* the plans were carelessly made"; and "He *never* heard the alarm." Many such "sentence adverbs" may be placed in different positions in the sentence without change of meaning, though with change of emphasis or of naturalness: "*Always* she was well dressed"; "She *always* was well dressed"; "She was well dressed *always*." The more natural position is likely to be before a stressed verb or other stressed element.

Adverbial clauses that do not definitely qualify a single word in the main clause are construed as "sentence adverbs" or "sentence modifiers." This is the situation in a sentence sent in by "J. W.": "Mr. Thomas carefully shot the seal through the head, for a body wound might have let water enough into his lungs to sink him." The *for*-clause does not modify *shot* specifically, or *care-*

fully, or any other element of the main clause. It would be considered a modifier of the sentence.

Obviously, the difficulty comes from the inaccurate but conventional statement that adverbs modify "verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs." When patently one doesn't modify one of these parts of speech but rather qualifies the meaning of the whole main clause, the current solution is to call it a "sentence adverb." Perhaps some original grammarian needs to tackle the problem of the syntax of adverbs.

American Speech for October contains an article of immediate use to teachers of English: "On the Placement of Correlatives in Modern English," by Lillian Mermin. Miss Mermin studied the statements in handbooks, grammars, and dictionaries on the use of correlative conjunctions, with special reference to the requirement of parallelism in the elements connected. Typically the theory is that *either . . . or*, *both . . . and*, *not only . . . but also*, and other correlatives should be followed by equivalent and precisely parallel expressions. According to this doctrine, locutions like "both in India and Australia," "both the Indians and Australians," and ". . . will not only catch unhappy phrases and sentences but will see more of the details . . ." are incorrect.

Following the rule exactly leads to awkward and unidiomatic writing; and, as Miss Mermin shows, those who state the rule, as well as better writers, do not follow it in their actual usage. Their practice is often better than their theory.

Miss Mermin suggests that the statement of principle should be revised to conform to actual usage and gives four specific points for a more accurate definition of the proper constructions with correlatives:

1. The basis is the correlation or connection of two ideas.
2. These ideas are expressed in constructions that are basically of equal grammatical value—clauses, phrases, single words in comparable constructions.
3. But we should recognize variations in word order between the two correlated constructions—especially that the first connective often stands after an element in its construction, as in “He not only reads all your books, but he recommends them to everyone.”
4. We should also recognize the frequency in idiomatic English of omissions of words in the second construction, in writing as well as in speaking. In the second construction, a preposition is commonly omitted, so that there need be no question of the propriety of “both in India and Australia”; and the subject of a second clause or the auxiliary of a verb is also frequently omitted.

Miss Mermin's article discusses other special cases.

If we would teach the principles of the use of correlatives in some such form as this sketched here—and read themes accordingly—we not only would be more honestly representing good English usage but also would stand a better chance of having our precepts respected.

P. G. P.

In the sentence “Edna lives upstairs of Sally,” is there any satisfactory substitute for the expression “upstairs of”?

H. M. S.

Edna lives above Sally or over Sally certainly expresses the contiguity adequately; and, if one wishes, he might include the number of flights. *Upstairs of* is not characteristic of educated usage.

J. C. B.

TWO AMERICAN ETYMOLOGIES

There were no hammocks before Columbus discovered America. That is, there were no hammocks except for Americans.

Neither were there any cannibals. Before 1492 eaters of human flesh were anthropophagi.

The Carib Indians were the original cannibals, “Carib” being but a shortened form of “Caribal” or “Cannibal,” the native name for the bad red men of the West Indies. The Caribbean is, of course, the Sea of the Cannibals.

The cannibals or Caribs, like other Indians of the Spanish Main, slept in hammocks; and some scholars think that “hammock” was originally a Carib word.

By the time Columbus reached Hispaniola all West Indian natives were using hammocks, which they wove out of cotton rope.

So comfortable were the red men’s sleeping nets that the sailors adopted them at once; and sailors have been using them ever since.

Columbus discovered the first cigar. It was being smoked by a fat, lazy, Cuban Indian who lolled stark naked in a hammock under a spreading mahogany tree.

“Cigar” is a Siboney word for tobacco. The Siboneyes, natives of Cuba, smoked their tobacco in a fat roll. Spaniards learned to call Cuban tobacco *cigarro* because of the way it was rolled.

The leaf—that is, unrolled tobacco—got its name from the Carib Indians. “Tobacco” is really the Carib for “pipe.” As the Spaniards already had a word for pipe, they used tobacco to signify the plant or leaf.

Nicotine, the alkaloid present in tobacco, is named after Jean Nicot, who introduced tobacco into France some three centuries ago. “Nicotine” is the French name for the weed, but we use it to designate the poison and hold fast to the native originals for purposes of pleasure.

EPSY COLLING

INKSTER, NORTH DAKOTA

SUMMARY AND REPORT

President H. W. Dodds of Princeton University announced on Christmas Day that the Princeton University Press will publish the first complete edition of the writings and correspondence of Thomas Jefferson. This may require as many as fifty volumes and as long as ten years.

Our Department of State wants the names of persons qualified to teach English in Latin-American countries. The requirements are: the A.B. or its equivalent, a working knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese, some experience in teaching English or foreign languages, and, for men, indefinite draft deferment. Address the Division of Cultural Relations, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C.

THE PERIODICALS

Wendell Johnson, director of the speech and speech pathology clinic at the University of Iowa, discusses "People in Quandaries" in the winter issue (Vol. I, No. 2) of *Etc. (A Review of General Semantics)*. Very often the frustrated are frustrated largely because of the semantic mistake of thinking of *success* and *failure* as absolute, so that, though they may have successes, they never achieve *success*. Many of us who pass as normal have strong inferiority feelings arising from the same semantic error. Moreover, it is characteristic of the mentally distraught that they cannot tell clearly what is the matter. The psychiatrist's chief service may be to ask such questions as will enable the patient to put his difficulty into words. This accomplished, the patient can be discharged and can take care of himself.

The same issue of *Etc.* reprints Charles I. Glicksberg's "Vocabulary and Intelligence" from a 1942 issue of the *New England Leaflet*. We summarized it before and now merely repeat that it punctures Johnson O'Con-

nor's assumption that the high correlation between size of vocabulary and intelligence proves that the enlargement of vocabulary will increase I.Q. and should be the main business of education.

In the *Comparative Literature News Letter* for November, Wing-tsit Chan, of Dartmouth College, urges the necessity of our "Discovering the Chinese Philosophy." Chinese painting was ridiculous in Western eyes until Occidentals at length realized that the Chinese painters do "not look at reality with a physical eye but with an 'inner eye'" and that perspective and other aspects of realism are subordinated to the expression of "rhythmic vitality and life movement." Appreciation of Chinese sculpture also requires an understanding of its philosophy, much like that of the Chinese painters. In the theater the Chinese expect, not characterization, as we do, but singing which is mostly poetry; music; and acting which is beauty of movement. (The impression that Li Po is the great Chinese poet is erroneous; Tu Fu's Confucian ethics and poems of loyalty and simple affection are more esteemed.) Even in philosophy proper the Western world knows chiefly the ancient Chinese, whereas in the last two thousand years the Chinese have transformed the Indian Buddhist doctrine of individual salvation into a doctrine of universal salvation and the doctrine of Nirvana after death to one of Nirvana here and now. Similarly, the old rationalism which subordinated the dynamic everyday world to transcendental reason, and idealism which looked into the mind to discover reason are replaced by a philosophy which finds reason in the world of everyday experience. This practical and worldly temper is characteristic of Chinese religion and philosophy. To understand Chinese culture, we must discover for our-

selves the philosophy of Chinese culture, which Wing-tsit Chan thinks is not just the sum of the philosophies of art, theater, religion, etc. His article is thickly strewn with references to scholarly books (in English) which he thinks most helpful.

Other items in this issue of the *Comparative Literature News Letter* are "Comparative Literature and the Post-war World," by Paul Russell Anderson; an announcement of "A Guide to Comparative Literature," by Arthur E. Christy, the editor; and "Current Publications," by Benjamin Boyce. The monthly *Comparative Literature News Letter* is published by a committee of N.C.T.E., of which Professor George B. Parks, Queens College, Flushing, Long Island, New York, is treasurer. The subscription is one dollar per year.

Not many think of "Henry James as Dramatic Critic," but Alan Wade declares he was a good one—too little published. Wade's paper is in *Theatre Arts* for December. James, attending the Théâtre Français in Paris in 1872 with James Russell Lowell, found there the excellence by which he tested the London plays which he later attended so assiduously. In connection with his criticism of Sir Henry Irving he insisted that the main element in staging a play is the actors' voicing of the lines and that the visual effects are secondary. He sensed and condemned the coming of elaborate mountings which have sometimes smothered the essential element. Unfortunately, his criticisms of London theaters were published chiefly in America and failed to exert the salutary influence they might have.

Our familiar "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is given an unfamiliar interpretation by Kenneth Burke in the autumn issue of *Accent*. His "dramatistic" analysis of the poem, which he entitles "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats," fills thirteen packed pages and cannot be satisfactorily summarized here. He considers the language as an act, for he thinks a poem is the symbolic act of the poet. Keats's poem is a romantic tran-

scendence of the opposition between the "aesthetic" and the "practical" which was strongly recognized by romantic philosophy. Stanza by stanza, Burke traces the progress from an implicit opposition between art and science to the final affirmation of the identity between truth and beauty.

Stanza I hints at two possible levels of thought or feeling—human and divine. Stanza II, with its Keatsian suspension of the erotic imagery at a pre-ecstasy point, contrasts the "sensual" and the "spirit." Stanza III leaves the level of earthly passion or fever. (Burke makes much of the poet's tuberculosis and the interaction between it and his poetic fevers.) Stanza IV supplies the appropriate setting for this spiritual action. At the level of this transcendent scene earthly laws of contradiction no longer prevail and the last stanza's triumphant identification of truth and beauty is possible. Incidental rhetorical comment as well as the supporting details can be gotten only from a careful study of Burke's full statement. [Is the elaborate work of art Burke presents really Keats's?]

The autumn *Accent* also presents Harry Slochower's exposition of "Mann's Latest Novels" as the artist's groping toward a conclusion for his Joseph story. *The Beloved Returns* depicts Goethe as sacrificing his body to art and spirit, and Lotte (his youthful love) as depriving herself of the romantic love for the safe husband and undistinguished children. In old age they confess to each other their sense of incompleteness. In the fantasy, *The Transposed Heads*, Sitte, married to a man with a wise head but weak body, longs for his brother with a weak head but a splendid body. When the heads are transposed and she has the wise head on the splendid body, she still wishes for the other man. This shows how man's visions "when translated in the actual become grounded and limited" so that "makeshifts, renunciations, and resignations are the common lot." Mann's treatment is, however, smiling and aloof, somewhat debunking tragedy.

BOOKS

AN AMERICAN WAY IN POETRY?

This book . . . aims to define whatever is truly indigenous and unique in the American tradition itself. . . . The selection [of poets studied] must be to some extent arbitrary and has been guided not so much by an aesthetic criterion as by the relevance of the poet to an analysis of the American spirit.

I have quoted those sentences from the Introduction to *The American Way of Poetry*.¹ To add that the book is one of the "Columbia Studies in American Culture"—"a series bringing together scholarly treatments of those aspects of American culture that are usually neglected in political histories and in histories of American literature and philosophy"—is to approximate definition and at the same time to suggest limitations a reader would do well to be aware of.

Mr. Wells's subject is American poetry from the Revolution to the present, from Frenau to Hart Crane, in so far as he can detect in that poetry what is significantly, peculiarly, and indigenously American. He studies some sixteen writers in detail, others more casually. Prominent among his major figures are Poe, Whitman, Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Melville, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Frost, Lindsay, Sandburg, and Jeffers. To each he gives a chapter whose title suggests the center of his thought: "New Destinations" (Frenau); "Discoveries in Imagination" (Poe); "Cambridge Culture and Folk Culture" (Lowell and Whittier); "The New England Conscience" (Robinson); "American Rhapsody" (Crane). The method is to segregate qualities in each poet which may be described as distinctly American and to define and analyze them with some illustrative quotation from the work of the poets. The final result is supposed to

be a kind of composite portrait of the American spirit as it appears in American poetry.

Clearly *The American Way of Poetry* calls for awareness of assumptions (1) that there is an American way; (2) that that way is a business of American poetry; (3) that selection of certain poets, omission or neglect of others, will define that way; and (4) that emphasis, in the selected poets, on qualities consonant with the theory of the book will result in significant criticism. One may quarrel with the assumptions, but there they are. One may feel that the totality is a book tailored to a thesis, highly selective and highly subjective, a book whose omissions are almost as important as its conclusions; but Mr. Wells has played fair with his readers. The assumptions must not be overlooked if one is to read with understanding.

To anyone already familiar with American poetry, the book has much to offer in suggestive and provocative criticism. You may not agree with Mr. Wells's judgments, but he will compel you to think about them and to refurbish your own. But, to the neophyte, it is less likely to be profitable reading; it will not make for understanding where there is not already considerable knowledge. For Mr. Wells supplies little background. He assumes that his reader is familiar with American poetry. He comes at once to grips with the points he wishes to make about his poets, and there is little for a reader to do about them, unless he already knows his way around in American literature. The illustrative quotations are too meager, too scrappy, to give any sense, any feel, for the quality of the poets' work. But perhaps in a treatment which seems to deprecate the aesthetic criterion, one has little right to cavil about that; perhaps it is irrelevant criticism.

For those who are hospitable to Mr. Wells's thesis the book is valuable and suggestive. For those inclined to doubt whether

¹ Henry W. Wells, *The American Way of Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943. Pp. 246. \$2.75.

there be an American way, or any other national way, in literature; whether, if there be, it is not a relatively unimportant way, to be regarded as incidental to a more cosmopolitan human way; whether criticism such as this is not misguided, likely to end in provincialism, in chauvinism—well, the author has been honest with them; he has warned them at the beginning and warned them with a frankness disarming to criticism.

EARL DANIELS

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

A WAY TO BETTER ENGLISH¹

In attempting to evaluate a handbook for composition classes, a reviewer is essentially concerned with two questions: "Will students like the book?" and "Will teachers like it?" The first question is not without significance, but, inasmuch as textbooks are chosen by teachers to suit what they consider the needs of their classes, it is the second of these critical questions that requires more attention.

A Way to Better English is a handbook that students should like. Probably English instructors, no matter how cynically they may talk, still have romantic notions about the use that students make of handbooks. But in so far as students read this book as a book and do not merely confine themselves to working out assigned exercises, they will find the reading both easy and profitable. They should enjoy the happy blending of informality and sincerity in the writing. They should find the illustrations apt and clear. They should appreciate the practical nature of the advice that the author offers at every stage of the composition. Some of them may be grateful for the convincing way the author gets them to assume the responsibility for self-criticism. A few may even see that in a quiet sort of way this is a wise book, that it is a book that comes out of a great deal of criti-

cal experience with students and with writing and with the problems that arise when these two are brought together.

Whether teachers will like the book will depend chiefly on what the teacher considers to be the function of the handbook he selects. The answer to that question may be influenced by departmental regulations, but in the long run it will be determined by the individual teacher's preferences and procedures. If a teacher wants a reference work, if he wants the text to provide the facts while he provides the advice, this book will not satisfy him. It will not answer the hundreds of questions concerning usage that have to be answered, nor will it give the student the linguistic background that will enable him to answer such questions for himself. While there may be much in the book that such a teacher can and will use, he will not find in it information that he considers indispensable in a text.

If, however, the teacher wants a book that deals with the organization, writing, and revision of themes and with the problems involved in the relationship of reading and writing, this book will have much to offer. The discussions on choosing a subject, outlining, and student self-criticism are excellent. The use of a functional rather than a conventional analysis for the understanding of syntax allows the student to see the forest and the trees at the same time. The advice about diction—both in its emphasis upon concreteness and in its exposure of deadwood—is free from pedantry without sacrificing a genuine concern for precision of communication. The analyses of unsatisfactory student themes and the contrasting illustrations of good student writing provide the most useful kind of material for classroom discussion. And the inclusion of such subjects as "Propaganda Analysis," "The Research Article," "Social and Business Correspondence," and "Examination Technique" (a section unfortunately usually omitted in handbooks) permits the teacher to turn the composition assignment into whatever channels seem most useful.

From the point of view of a teacher who

¹ Edward Foster, *A Way to Better English*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1942. Pp. 347. \$2.00.

wants this kind of handbook, the chief weakness of the work arises from the compromise that the author has made. In his Introduction, Professor Foster suggests that students in his college days wrote better than do students today because then there was more emphasis on writing and criticism and less on the machinery of textbook exercises. He feels that in modern composition classes the instructor has been largely displaced by the handbook; so he proposes to "give a large part of Freshman English back to the instructor" by reducing the handbook machinery.

The attempt is praiseworthy, and through much of the book it is successful. But—whether of his own volition or at the publisher's insistence—the author has made concessions that bring some of the machinery back again. Thus his discussion of reasoning follows the conventional classifications of induction, deduction, analogy, syllogism, generalization, and causal relationship; and the student who, by the grace of the author, escaped the nomenclature and exercises of formal grammar is forced to face the nomenclature and exercises of formal logic. This traditional approach to clear

thinking is balanced by a chapter on semantics and another on propaganda analysis, each of which uses a different system of classification. The student, therefore, is required to operate three different kinds of devices in order to improve his thinking in reading and writing. If he succeeds, of course, the machinery is justified; but by the same reasoning the machinery of conventional syntactical analysis is also justified if it works. The author's Introduction, however, indicates that he has not too much faith in its efficiency.

Perhaps this objection of inconsistency is one that will worry no one but a reviewer. Perhaps it would be more in accordance with the facts to recognize that a freshman composition handbook is necessarily a miscellany, designed to meet the needs of all kinds of teachers of all kinds of classes. Judged by this standard, *A Way to Better English* is a most useful book. It contains something for every teacher, and a great deal for some teachers. It is certainly a work that merits consideration when handbooks are being chosen.

JAMES M. MCCRIMMON
UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

Flint. By Charles G. Norris. Doubleday. \$2.50.

In *Seed, Pig Iron, and Bricks without Straw* Norris has handled controversial themes. In this novel capitalism versus workers is his subject. J. B. Rutherford, head of a powerful San Francisco family, a shipping magnate, is an individualist who has found the past to his liking. When government "interferes," when strikes paralyze the city, and when life seems to have laid a curse upon the Rutherford family, the old lion roars. A gripping story.

The Signpost. By E. Arnot Robertson. Macmillan. \$2.50.

A convalescing English flier, on a boat to Ireland, where he hopes boyhood scenes will restore his nerves, meets a French girl also emotionally upset. Later they come into close contact with the people in a little Irish village. A meaty book, many char-

acters, and conflicts of background and thought. The signpost, "To Dublin," is something of a symbol.

Heart of Europe: An Anthology of Creative Writing in Europe. Edited by Klaus Mann and Hermann Kesten. \$5.00.

A comprehensive composite portrait of the best European writing since World War I; essays, poems, and stories by a hundred and sixty authors representing twenty-one countries. Eight hundred pages. Enlightening and important.

Lytton Strachey. By Max Beerbohm. Knopf. \$1.00.

A lecture recently delivered at Cambridge University.

Persons and Places: Memories of Childhood and Youth. By George Santayana. Scribner. \$2.50.

The great American philosopher writes of his childhood in a little Spanish town, of youth in New

England, and of days at Harvard. Individualistic and restrained—delightful reading.

The Complete Jefferson. Assembled and arranged by Paul K. Padover. Duell. \$5.00.

All of Thomas Jefferson's major writings, published and unpublished, with the exception of his letters; including his little-known autobiography. An important collection.

Red Roses for Me: A Play in Four Acts, By Sean O'Casey. Macmillan. \$2.00.

A strike takes place offstage and provides background for the play. A young Dublin Protestant in love with a Catholic girl is troubled by the conflicts between the two religions and by the menace of atheism. Symbolism, realism, and mysticism each have an important influence in the content and the very beautiful poetic language.

The Hawthorn Tree. By Paul Green. University of North Carolina Press. \$2.00.

"The tree made answer by and by
I've cause to grow triumphantly,
The sweetest dew that ere was seen
Doth fall on me to keep me green."

This "dew fall on the human spirit," says Mr. Green, "is the thing that matters." In his Preface for Professors, Green charges that what young students need and want is "a recharge of feeling and wild fresh impulse, something to live for, something to fight for, something to die for." Following the Preface are fourteen essays upon timely subjects related to life, literature, drama, community interests, and democracy in woeful times. Challenging.

Indian Crisis: The Background. By John S. Hoyland. Macmillan. \$2.00.

The author spent fifteen years in India as doctor, teacher, and famine-relief worker. He presents a vivid picture of life in every aspect. While in no sense a diatribe against present rulers, the book tells plainly of tragic mistakes of the past and warns of troubles ahead. A short, clear analysis of the Indian crisis, its background, and the (possible) shape of things to come.

Victoria Grandole. By Henry Bellamann. Simon. \$2.50.

Already purchased for movies. A dramatic story of a New England girl who married a scion of a great and grand aristocratic Louisiana family and her struggle to become a real Grandole. The Grandole mansion, with its sinister power over the lives of its owners and inmates, dominates the story.

Winter Wheat. By Mildred Walker. Harcourt. \$2.50.

By the author of *Dr. Norton's Wife* and *The Brewer's Big Horses*. Ellen Webb was the child of the World War I marriage of a New England soldier and a Russian peasant girl. When New England tradition made the East impossible as a home, the frus-

trated father and stolid Russian mother established a home on a wheat ranch in Montana. How they worked out their destiny and what life did to their child and how she solved her problems are the theme of an interesting novel.

The Two Mrs. Abbotts. By D. E. Stevenson. Farrar. \$2.50.

A story of English village life, gay and charming.

Through Japanese Barbed Wire. By Gwen Priestwood. Appleton-Century. \$2.00.

Mrs. Priestwood was serving in the Auxiliary Nursing Service in Hong Kong when the Japs took the city. She was, with many others, sent to a concentration camp with three thousand British, American, and Dutch captives. "When I got so hungry I couldn't stand it another day," she says, she escaped with a British fellow-internee and, after a twenty-four-day trek of great danger and hardship, reached Chungking and safety. Mrs. Priestwood spent her childhood in China. She tells her story humorously, with remarkable poise and a fine sense of appreciation of and gratitude toward the Chinese people who helped her on her way.

The Unconquerables. By Joseph Auslander. Simon. \$1.50.

These few poems take the form of letters to the peoples of German-occupied countries. Says the author: "I chose an irregular structural pattern because it permitted a larger latitude of utterance, a warmer tone, a freer change of pace." The prevalence of rhythm, he says, was not deliberate; also he found it far more natural to use rhyme than to avoid it.

The Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge. Edited by Roderick Peattie. Vanguard. \$3.75.

The second volume in the "American Mountains Series." A beautifully illustrated book with contributions by such well-known writers as Donald C. Peattie on "Indian Days and the Coming of the White Man" and "Mountain People" by Alberta P. Hannum. Other writers tell of the rivers, the geology, the flowers, and the trees, the legends and trails.

Montana—High, Wide, and Handsome. By Joseph K. Howard. Yale University Press. \$3.00.

Mr. Howard's interest centers upon the exploitation of Montana as territory and state and the fact that it is now facing a "far from reassuring future." It may be that his book will do something to avert further profiteering and promote a happier future.

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